

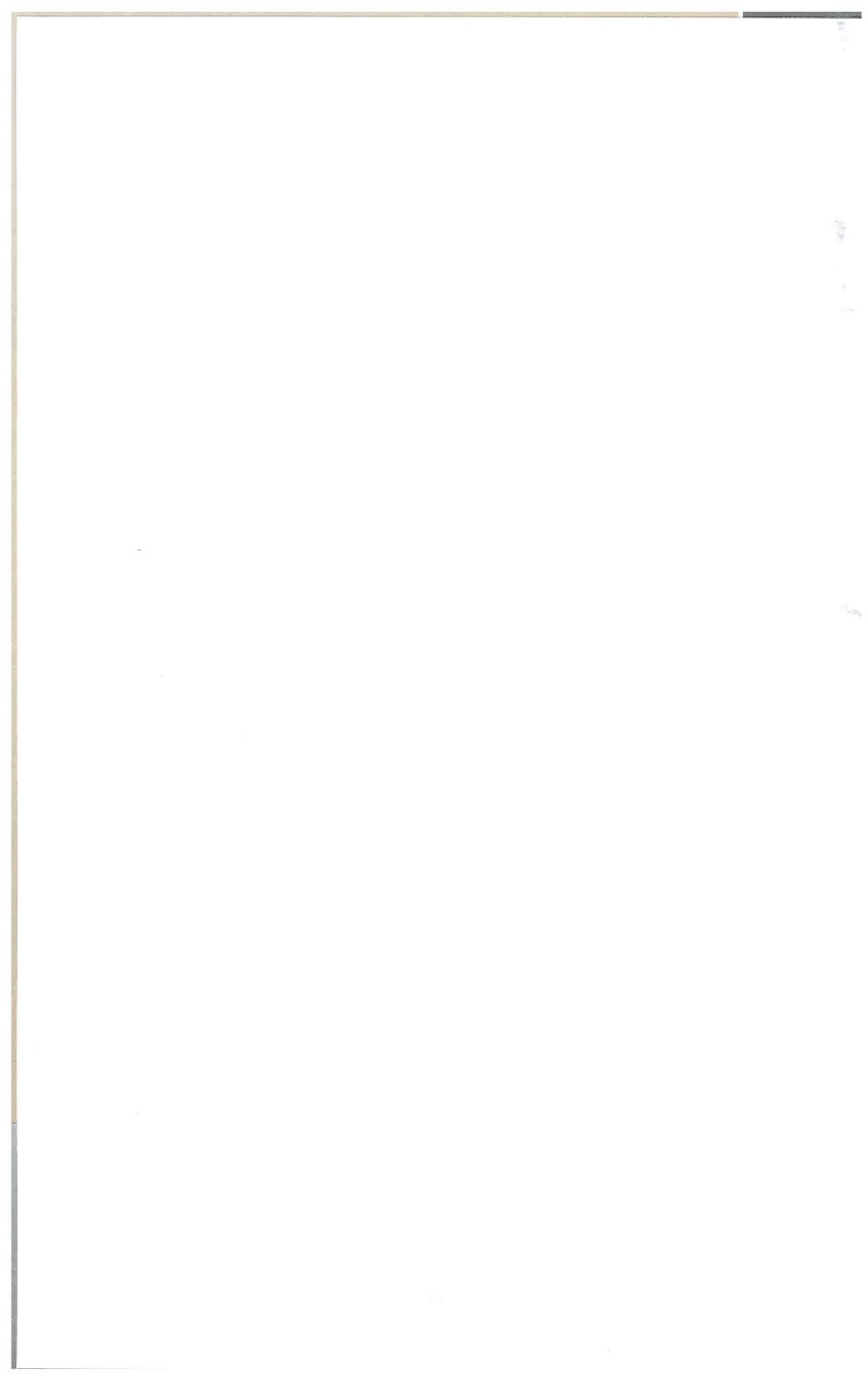


*Seeing the Invisible
in Late Antiquity and
the Early Middle Ages*



Edited by

*Giselle de Nie, Karl F. Morrison
and Marco Mostert*





Utrecht Studies in Medieval Literacy



One of the most important developments in European history took place in communication. A transition is clearly visible from illiterate societies to societies in which most members are active users of the written word. This complex process, which started in Antiquity, and is still not complete, gained momentum during the Middle Ages. This series is intended to provide a forum for publications on the history of non-verbal, oral and written communication in the Middle Ages. Interest in the subject is now widespread within the worldwide community of medieval studies; and ever more scholars are becoming convinced of the potential of studying the tensions between oral and literate modes of thought.

Seeing the Invisible in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages Papers from "Verbal and Pictorial Imaging: Representing and Accessing Experience of the Invisible, 400-1000" (Utrecht, 11-13 December 2003)

Limiting itself to the vital centuries when the late Roman West reshaped itself into a first "Europe", the conference on which the volume is based explored the dominant understanding of human nature in that era: that human existence was both body (in the visible world of material things) and soul (in the invisible world of spirit). This was a legacy of pre-Christian elements handed down from Greek philosophy and the Hebrew Scriptures. Assimilating it to indigenous cultures in the Roman West, many alien to the ancient Mediterranean world, precipitated sea-changes in the conception of human psychology. Ensuing frictions sparked extraordinary expressions of creativity in words and visual images. It also created dangerously subversive disequilibria in the collective mentality within élites and between them and majority cultures. The papers in this volume investigate numerous configurations of a new culture taking shape in that volatile environment. They contribute to continuing debates about the cognitive co-ordination of words and pictorial images, and to cross-disciplinary dialogues in such disparate fields as art history, religious literature, mysticism, and cultural anthropology.

Cover image: A tetramorph, one of the the winged creatures seen by the prophet Ezekiel in his vision of the heavenly throne, with the heads of man, ox, lion, and eagle (Ez 1, 5 ff.), from the Drogo sacramentary, produced at Metz around the middle of the ninth century (MS Paris, BNF, lat.9428, fol. 15r). Reproduced with permission.

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SEEING THE INVISIBLE IN LATE ANTIQUITY AND THE EARLY MIDDLE AGES

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IMAGING: REPRESENTING AND ACCESSING
EXPERIENCE OF THE INVISIBLE, 400-1000”
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Preface

This volume contains papers from an international colloquium entitled “Verbal and Pictorial Imaging: Representing and Accessing Experience of the Invisible, 400-1000”. The colloquium was held at the University of Utrecht (11.-13. December, 2003), under the auspices of the Utrecht Centre for Medieval Studies (UCMS). It was organized by the editors of the present volume in collaboration with Herbert Kessler.

The proceedings are published in *Utrecht Studies in Medieval Literacy*, which is intended as a forum for publications on the history of non-verbal, oral and written communication in the Middle Ages. To some students of medieval communication, the subject of the present volume may seem less than relevant to their usual research interests. However, as is explained in the Introduction, the idea for “Verbal and Pictorial Imaging” developed in discussions after an earlier symposium on medieval literacy, on “Reading Images and Texts” (the proceedings of which are published in the same series). No one would question the relevance of ‘reading’ to the study of medieval literacy or, in the case of the ‘reading’ of images, to that of medieval visual literacy. Those who are doubtful whether a consideration of ‘imaging’ is similarly useful, are asked to peruse this volume before deciding on its interest for their own research. There is a chance that they may come away convinced of the potential of this line of investigation.

We want to thank all those present at the colloquium for taking part in the lively discussions. A special word of thanks goes to Peter Dronke, who kindly presented his views on “Imagination and Images: From the Late Pagan to the Early Christian World”. Because he had recently published this paper’s arguments in a monograph,¹ he understandably decided not to publish this paper.

¹ P. DRONKE, *Imagination in the Late Pagan and Early Christian World: The First Nine Centuries A.D.* (Florence, 2003).

Gerhard Wolf, too, had valid reasons not to publish his contribution. All other papers appear, mostly in thoroughly revised version, in this volume.

The organizers thank the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW), the Council for the Humanities (GW) of The Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO) and the Research Institute for History and Culture (OGC) of the Faculty of Arts of Utrecht University, and Prof. dr. J.M. van Winter (acting as bursar of the former Association of Dutch members of the Europäische Mittelalter Akademie) for their generous financial assistance. They also thank Irene van Renswoude and Babette Hellemans, both of the Utrecht Centre for Medieval Studies, for their assistance before and during the colloquium. The staff of the Utrecht University Museum, the venue of the colloquium, has to be complimented on the quality of their hospitality.

Abbreviations

<i>AASS</i>	<i>Acta sanctorum quotquot toto orbe coluntur, vel a catholicis scriptoribus celebrantur, quae ex latinis et graecis aliarumque gentium antiquis monumentis collegit, digessit, notis illustravit J. BOLLANDUS, ed. G. HENSCHENIUS, 1- (Antwerp, then Brussels, then Brussels and Paris, then Paris, 1643-).</i>
<i>CCCM</i>	<i>Corpus Christianorum: Continuatio Mediaevalis, 1- (Turnhout, 1966-)</i>
<i>CCSL</i>	<i>Corpus Christianorum: Series Latina, 1- (1954-)</i>
<i>CSEL</i>	<i>Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum, 1- (Vienna, 1866-)</i>
<i>MGH</i>	<i>Monumenta Germaniae Historica</i>
<i>AA</i>	<i>Auctores Antiquissimi, 15 vols. (Berlin, 1877-1919)</i>
<i>CAPP</i>	<i>Capitularia Regum Francorum, 2 vols. (Hannover, 1883-1897)</i>
<i>CONC</i>	<i>Concilia, 1- (Hannover and Leipzig, then Leipzig, 1893-)</i>
<i>EPP</i>	<i>Epistolae (in Quarto), 1-8.1 (Berlin, 1887-1939)</i>
<i>LL</i>	<i>Leges (in Folio), 5 vols. (Hannover, 1835-1889)</i>
<i>PP</i>	<i>Poetae Latini medii aevi, 6 vols. (Berlin, then Leipzig, München, Weimar, 1881-1979)</i>
<i>SRG</i>	<i>Scriptores rerum Germanicarum</i>
<i>SRM</i>	<i>Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum, 7 vols. (Hannover and Leipzig, 1884-1951)</i>
<i>PG</i>	<i>Patrologiae cursus completus ... Series Graeca, ed. J.P. MIGNE, 161 vols. (Paris, 1857-1936)</i>
<i>PL</i>	<i>Patrologiae cursus completus ... Series Latina, ed. J.P. MIGNE, 221 vols. (Paris, 1841-1864)</i>
<i>SC</i>	<i>Sources Chrétiennes, 1- (Paris, 1942-)</i>

Introduction

KARL F. MORRISON and GISELLE DE NIE

These papers were originally delivered at an international colloquium entitled “Verbal and Pictorial Imaging: Representing and Accessing Experience of the Invisible: 400-1000”. The colloquium was held at the University of Utrecht (11.-13. December, 2003), under the auspices of the Utrecht Centre for Medieval Studies. The conference was conceived as the continuation of an earlier colloquium at the University of Utrecht on a similar subject.¹ Some participants in that quite wide-ranging conference felt that the framework had been set for a more intensive exploration of methods of apprehending and expressing what were regarded as invisible realities in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages: that is, in the period after the dissolution of the ancient world when the culture later to be called “The first Europe” took shape. The colloquium represented in the present volume was the result.

What is consciously hidden in the midst of art and literature in the cultures and periods under review is nothing other than human mortality. At the core of the paintings and manuscripts, the buildings and sculptures, the narratives and liturgies considered in these studies, their makers hid preoccupations with their own mortality, just as surely as they reverently hid the bones and dust of saints in garish, exorbitantly luxurious reliquaries and tombs gleaming with precious metals and the rarest, most costly, gems. To set the paradox, “seeing the invisible”, as the theme for exploring motives for artistic creativity was to enter into the most enduring anxieties and hopes of human existence.

¹ The Third Utrecht Symposium on Medieval Literacy, held at the University of Utrecht in December, 2000, is published as *Reading Images and Texts: Medieval Images and Texts as Forms of Communication*, ed. M. HAGEMAN and M. MOSTERT (Turnhout, 2004: *Utrecht Studies in Medieval Literacy* 8).

Manifestly, there are many kinds of invisibility, beings and ways of being beyond the range of physical vision. These include the infinitesimally small and the immensely large or distant. They include abstract ideas in the mind, and any kind of creative inspiration in poetry, music, or the visual arts. The world of the physically blind is completely invisible. That is how it becomes an analogue for those whom their enemies call intellectually, morally, or religiously blind, and whose teachings and ways of life dominant elites suppress. In the period under review in this volume, Christians regularly called unbelievers, and other Christians whom they considered schismatic or heretical spiritually blind. The huge category of the invisible include all those whom society pushes to its margins and shuns. Ralph Ellison could think of no more appropriate title for his classic portrayal of a black man in white-dominated society than *The Invisible Man* (1952). There are naturally kinds of knowledge, and treasures, that are deliberately concealed, and, in legends, the great magical power of rendering oneself invisible at will. Behind human events, people have been able to detect blind Fortune, all-seeing Fate, and the invisible hand of Providence – all imperceptible to the eye of the body.

With one exception, the papers in this volume deal with the area called spiritual, or supernatural. The exception is Beat Brenk's "Visibility and (Partial) Invisibility of Early Christian Images". Brenk's argument could not be more straightforward. The questions he poses and the materials he considers lead to a down-to-earth conclusion: In some cases, you can't see the invisible. Brenk's subject is how patrons and artists collaborated on exquisite and costly works of art which could only be seen in part, if at all. He refers, not only to the planned invisibility of works of art or segments of them, but also to hiddenness of meaning deliberately constructed by complexity and learned obscurity of symbolism in pictorial works. As explanation, he concludes that visibility and intelligibility were not prime objectives of such projects. Rather, the buildings, monuments, and objects he considers were trophies created to express wealth through conspicuous waste. They proclaimed the abundance of resources that made them possible. They served a cult of magnificence exhibited in public monuments and in private structures, such as tombs, that – partially or entirely, optically or intellectually – could not be seen.

In this one regard, writing about artifacts that could not be seen, Brenk's article is analogous with two others. William Diebold writes about Carolingian fear of idolatry – a practice that, in his judgment, the Carolingians never saw in their own thoroughly Christianized homeland. Similarly, Paul Dutton considers a subject that is invisible to us because – to all appearances – it no longer exists: John Scotus Eriugena's lost treatise, *On the Vision of God*.

By and large, the other papers in this volume deal with spiritual beings (such as God and the soul), divine powers (such as those inhering in relics of the saints and expressed in miracles), and other forms of invisibility manifested in mental activities, including artistic methods and the use of metaphors and symbols. By the eighth century, St. John of Damascus was able to write, quoting the Apostle Paul (Rm 1, 20), "From the creation of the world, the invisible things of God are clearly seen through images".² Paul had actually written that the invisible things of God from the creation of the world have been discerned through those which were made. John Damascene's alteration to his words is evidence that by John's day, for John and others who shared his principles, the works of human hands had taken their place with God's own creations as windows on the invisible, as means by which, in an often-repeated phrase, one could pass "by visible things to the invisible (*per visibilia ad invisibilia*)".

However, no sharp boundary divided visible from invisible. As Paul Dutton reminds us in his paper, "Carolingian Invisibles and Eriugena's Lost *Vision of God*", the same beings could be both visible and invisible. This was true of words and images, material vessels of spiritual contents, and of all acts of worship. It was true of sacraments, including baptism and the Eucharist. Human beings, too, were conspicuously both visible (in their bodies) and invisible (in their minds and souls).

In their discussions of reliquaries, costly ornamented cases made to contain, honour, and safeguard holy relics, Cynthia Hahn and Shigebumi Tsuji consider a device invented precisely to conceal objects of veneration, the visually unprepossessing relics in which divine power was thought to reside. Erik Thunø presents yet another variation on the theme of revelation through concealment. For, in his discussion of ninth-century mosaics in Rome, he concludes that, not only the design, position, inscription and iconography of the pictures were intended to signify overtly, but also the physical properties of the *tesserae* used to make them covert signifiers, the sparkling cubes of glass and stone with their "physical matter ... and immaterial brilliance". Exploring the invisible had necessarily to take the visible into account. With the conspicuous exception of John Scotus Eriugena (*ca.* 810-877), the subject of several papers in this volume, mysticism was muted in the Latin West between the fifth and the twelfth centuries. Thus, the mystic's aspiration lay beyond the spiritual horizon for most in that period, with its goal for that beatific vision of God at which the human soul would use images to abolish

² John of Damascus, *On the Divine Images*, l. 11, tr. A. LOUTH, *Three Treatises on the Divine Images* (Crestwood, NY, 2003), p. 26.

images, ascending into the life of God and subsisting there, laying aside its individuality, and its unlikeness to the divine. Tsuji follows another trail in suggesting that some objects, not humanly made, that were venerated as relics (such as rocks from holy places) led beyond images to an aniconic intimation of the “abyss”, or “Nothing”, of divinity.

Religious art constituted a special category of communication like other forms of signifiers, but also radically unlike them. The unlikeness – for example, to the scientific diagrams that Kühnel discusses (invaded by a religious emblem, the Cross) – came about because of tradition. A glaring fact in the tradition of Christian art was the prohibition of graven images in the Commandments given, according to the book of Exodus, by God himself to the people of Israel. Images made to function in religious cult therefore stood under a taboo which rigorists could extend to all figurative art, and which did come into play during the Carolingian period half a world away from the Latin West, in Byzantium. Tradition also imposed other tabus, such as one of decorum that militated against nudity, and another imported from theology that made all efforts to know spiritual beings – including God and the soul – through human means vain, since only God, by acts of singular grace, could open up such knowledge, essential to salvation, to those he had chosen to be saved.

All painting, including religious painting, was figurative. Because its whole purpose – for better or worse – was to fool the eyes, giving the appearance of reality when it actually delivered only painted surfaces, *trompe l'oeil* art of every kind was open to the reproach of deception. It was explained in paradoxes: for example, it was what it was not, and it made the absent present. (The portrait of an emperor was and was not “the emperor”.) The fact that figurative painting, and sculpture, produced objects made by human imagination and manual skill, out of inert matter, the character of art as deception – as “lies” – made it especially suspect as a conveyance of religious truths, and, with the sanction of the Second Commandment, opened it to the charge of idolatry and therefore of being the instrument, not of holiness, but of demons’ dark powers.

Byzantine theologians who favoured the use of figurative art developed a rationale justifying its use in service of worship. For them, the essential justification was that the two natures of Christ wiped away the foreignness of spirit and matter, and that material things, and the physical senses by which we perceive them, were thereby incorporated into the quest for spiritual knowledge. For them, the paradoxes condemning *trompe l'oeil* art as a pack of lies were filled out and sanctified by the paradoxes of Christ, elucidating how

in his divine and human natures, God himself built a bridge between spirit and matter. As God, Christ was pure spirit; as man, he was physical and spiritual. He was both uncircumscribed and formless in his divinity (and therefore could not be pictured), and circumscribed and formed in his humanity (and therefore could be pictured). It was impossible to separate his divinity from his humanity. Therefore, in him, and in pictures of him, the invisible God could be seen in Christ, his visible image. This was the theological justification that religious art needed.

As a generally accepted doctrine, however, such justification was still lacking in the Latin West as late as the Carolingian period. To be sure, a letter from Pope Hadrian I to Charlemagne proves that it was known and sanctioned in Rome. Still, thinking about religious art kept a distinct reserve. The Carolingian Renaissance yields no documents witnessing to living presences in painted images, such as the talking and bleeding Crucifixes of later eras. Occasionally, iconoclasm reared its head, but, hewing to words of Pope Gregory I two centuries old, the majority opinion was that religious art could, and should, be tolerated for some purposes – for instruction and ornamentation – without in any way serving as a bridge between the worlds of matter and spirit. That bridging function was reserved, not to works imagined and constructed by human beings, but to sacraments, and sacramental actions, setting aside earthly things by divine grace from common to sacred uses. The similitudes of art did not lead, as did similitudes in the great chain of Being, through stages of increasing likeness to God, the universal archetype.

*

In their debate with Socrates, the Sophists sketched out a sequence that may serve as a road map for the great issues of human communication in any age, including medieval journeys of the mind discussed in this volume. They identified four stages in the transition of thought, and, at each stage, denied the connections that would have given intellectual certainty. At the first stage, the human mind, shut in the closet of its own finitude, could not perceive things as they actually were. Then, even if it could do that, it could not abstract ideas that would correspond exactly with the concrete perception. At the third stage, it could not express in words its thoughts and feelings with anything more than approximate similarity. Finally, even if it did manage to construct an expression relatively like the configurations in its mind, no other mind could receive the message exactly as meant. The papers in this volume generally

concern two of these stages: the first, of perceiving, and the third, of expressing or configuring similitudes of the invisible. Indeed, one particular strength of these studies is the variety of ways they discover as paths to the invisible.

Like many other scholarly conferences, "Verbal and Pictorial Imaging" was conceived as variations on a theme. Invited to choose and develop their own subjects, participants delivered an array of improvisations. Some chose to investigate aspects of Late Antiquity (between the fourth and the eighth centuries). Written from geographical standpoints in Italy, North Africa, and Spain, their inquiries witness to the gradual separation between Greek East and Latin West. A greater number of participants addressed elements in early medieval western culture (between the fifth and the tenth centuries), predominantly in Frankish Gaul, though Germany, Italy, and Spain were also represented. About half the papers investigated the systems of thought constructed by towering individuals.³ The remaining studies considered general phenomena and characteristics of social, intellectual, and art history. In them, individuals figured as representatives, or instigators, of common norms. Perhaps, as one participant suggested, the individual writers in question thought of themselves as living and acting members of corporate action, a shared process of apprehension elucidated for them by incarnational theology of the communion of saints in the body of Christ.⁴

Given the historical nature of the conference, it is not surprising that the theme of change runs strongly and persistently through many of the studies. The papers in this collection plant distinct milestones in European history. Following metaphysical principles canonised in treatises masquerading under the name of Dionysius the Areopagite, a form of Christianity emerged in the Greek East that changed, by stages dominated by rhetorical (verbal) communication into "a more straightforwardly visual culture", in which truths were conveyed by visual images as well as by spoken words, images capable of expressing what could not be said in words. The result was a culture of imagery particularly congenial with mysticism (Louth; Tsuji). At the same time (between the fifth and the seventh centuries) in the Latin West, the elevated, aristocratic literature which required dominant elites to exercise their

³ These included, from Late Antiquity, studies of Augustine of Hippo (Burcht Pranger), and of Dionysius the Areopagite and John of Damascus (Andrew Louth and Shigebumi Tsuji), and, from the early Middle Ages, studies of Pope Paschal I (Erik Thunø), Amalarius of Metz (Celia Chazelle), and John Scotus Eriugena (Paul Dutton, Bianca Kühnel, and Karl Morrison).

⁴ Settings of individuals in a wider social context include Giselle de Nie's paper on Paulinus of Nola and Gregory of Tours and Willemien Otten's on John Cassian and Pope Gregory I. The connection between individual action and incarnational theology is Otten's.

imaginings in acquired, highly stylized ways, treating the physical world and events as illusory, faded before an earthier culture, accessible to the many, in which the everyday world was pervaded with the divine, and no artful discipline of the imagination was needed. Mental (or spiritual) and physical perceptions constituted one sensorium. No ornate structures of rhetoric were needed. Simple, direct discourse was adequate to convey what miracles revealed (de Nie). Correspondingly, calculated literary devices once used for the delight and enlightenment of another elevated class, sequestered monastic adepts, were assimilated to a more humble level of discourse suited to community-wide evangelism (Otten).

Two papers identify other major signs of further stages in this change in the status of language during the early Middle Ages. In the early fifth century, Augustine of Hippo had asked whether language could convey a “reality beyond itself”. In Muslim-dominated Spain, Beatus of Liébana (*fl.* 786) answered that it could not, at least in direct discourse. By his commentary on the Apocalypse, he attempted to transcend language through the interpretation of signs given by the text of Scripture, though he must have realized that his own symbolic exposition was fettered by earth-bound “contingency and ambivalence” (MacCormack). Still, even in view of the inadequacies of language and in the absence of anything resembling formal aesthetic criticism, scholars in Carolingian Gaul, Beatus’s contemporaries and later, tentatively opened an unprecedented epoch in intellectual discourse by developing a language and syntax for talking about visual art as a medium of communication (Noble).

Momentous as they were, these landmarks in the development of methods of portraying invisible things in verbal and visual images were surface phenomena. Like the cracked surface of the earth, they manifested shifts of geological plates far below the surface that actually produced an earthquake. The visible phenomena changed because of deep structural transformations in mentalities that sustained all discourse. What mental processes made it possible to detect and portray the invisible?

Some papers provide soundings of those fundamental transformations in understanding cognition itself. The papers devoted to giant figures in Late Antique and early medieval history contribute the bulk of these inquiries into theories of cognition, but they are not alone. Among the studies devoted to Late Antiquity, Pranger’s analysis of inconsistencies and incoherences in Augustine of Hippo’s ever-evolving ideas about sensory knowledge, and Louth’s discussion of the emergence of a Christian visual culture in the East are mutually reflexive with Patricia Cox Miller’s topography of three distinct

fifth-century understandings of how words could move the mind from physical to spiritual vision. One of her three is Augustine's, offering a point of dialogue with Pranger's perspective. Both Miller and Louth give considerable weight to Late Antique education in *ekphrasis* – descriptive rhetoric calculated to arouse pictures in the mind – as a hinge on which mentalities turned from verbal to visual cognition. The studies by de Nie and Otten likewise illuminate the social context of changes in mentalities that characterized the transition from Late Antique to medieval Europe.

As to the Carolingian period and its fabrication of a grammar of art, the studies of two great agents of change illuminate mental processes that that grammar was invented to serve. The first is Amalarius of Metz in Chazelle's analysis of his liturgical masterpiece, the *Liber officialis*, and the controversies in which his doctrines embroiled him. Looking to the infrastructure of Amalarius's ideas, Chazelle examines the forces brought to bear in his intellectual formation by his education in the content and symbolic exegesis of the Bible and in the Latin patristic tradition, by the discipline of living in monastic community under the paradigms of conduct drawn from hagiography, and by the constant practice of methods of ruminative meditation, especially directed toward Scripture, the Cross, and the Eucharist. Chazelle accents a polemical energy in Amalarius when she finds, breaking through the crust of received erudition, Amalarius's claims to direct inspiration by the Holy Spirit and to original, spontaneous discovery.

Similarly, the three explorations into the thought-processes of John Scotus Eriugena, a man whose extraordinary learning was inexplicably deep, unrivalled, and unprecedented, expose a disturbingly subversive force. For Eriugena's psychology, combined with his apocalyptic conviction about the goal of human existence, led him ultimately to extinguish images as media of truth, suppressed for the blessed in the beatific vision of God (Dutton, Morrison). Kühnel's discussion of Eriugena belongs to an inquiry into how the diagram, as an instrument of instruction and artistic expression inherited from classical Antiquity, was expanded in the early Middle Ages by the introduction of the Cross as a dominant emblem of order in the world and, in learning, a stark, omnipresent sign of the shift in understanding cognitive processes between Augustine and Eriugena.

The nature of the conference invited examination of how words and visual images signify, alone and in conjunction. How did the lines of signification by words and pictorial images converge in actual experience, and thereby become, not merely representations of reality, but the vivid, compelling reality itself? A fair number of scholars concentrated on the experience of signification.

Several authors underscore the development, and the power, of “pictomorphic” ways of reading and hearing texts. Louth and Miller provide incisive explorations of this cultural shift, in Late Antiquity, essential, particularly in the reading of symbols and generally arousing the emotions of piety. In her discussion of reliquaries, Hahn carries the analysis of pictorial rhetoric to an important theoretical level by assessing the reliquaries themselves a metaphors.

Some authors analyze pictures as windows into the text, in every case complex illuminations requiring the exercise of immense learning and habits of pictorial imagination. Herbert Kessler raises up from within a few inscriptions and manuscript illustrations a recondite structure of thought that formed the intellectual and aesthetic infrastructure of the visible manuscript. Thunø, too, opens the elegance with which ninth-century Roman mosaicists and their patron, Pope Paschal I, set up a dazzling symbolic interplay of words, pictures, and the matter composing them, all charged with the awe of a sacred space. Bianca Kühnel’s exploration of scientific diagrams, with their mixtures of words and pictorial representations, reveals the apparent intrusion of the Cross, for reasons of piety, into visualizations of the material world and its relationships. And Sabine MacCormack discloses the process by which artists performed a free translation of a text, a biblical commentary, into pictorial form according to a many-layered symbolic code.

Each of these explorations takes for granted a grounding in the actual life experience of those who produced and used the works of art, experience that enabled them to absorb into the marrow of their bones the abstractions that they found in word and picture. For Kessler’s Abbess Hitda and Thunø’s Pope Paschal, the existential setting was political instability that called for power to express itself in magnificence, joined to the demands of private prayer and public liturgy. For the users of Kühnel’s diagrams, it was the demands of inquiry and instruction. Bearing in mind the Byzantine justification of the veneration of icons on the principle that the icon “was” its prototype (as an emperor’s portrait “is” the emperor), one cannot at this stage exclude the idea that, through the image one could apprehend the prototype – an idea that, as Frances Yates demonstrated long ago, inspired Renaissance *magi* to memorize such diagrams on the theory that, by taking the cosmos into their minds in that way, they could manipulate it.⁵ Finally, MacCormack’s Beatus and his illuminators turned to the horrors and promises of the Apocalypse, with its disclosures of the future triumph under an avalanche of symbols, as members

⁵ See, especially, F.A. YATES, *The Art of Memory* (London, 1966), and EAD., *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* (New York, 1969).

of a Christian society defeated and reduced to subjection by the Muslim conquest of Spain.

Perhaps, most vividly of all, the performance of liturgy enabled people in their own places and times to recapitulate and to experience the deeds and emotions represented in texts and visual portrayals. Liturgy served as a powerful means for infusing, not only language, art, and theory, but life itself with the numinous. Louth underscores the importance of liturgy as an enactment of spiritual virtues that, in the thought of Dionysius Areopagita, brought heaven and earth together, and Miller's discussion of commemorative liturgies at the tombs of saints accents the performative character of narrative in that setting, drawing participants into the experiences portrayed in texts, and stirring with that virtual experience of agonies and atrocities of the past both deep anxieties and fervent hopes of the living present. Addressing the later, Carolingian, period, Chazelle also places great emphasis on liturgical performance as a way to pass from intellectual reflection into a vivid, direct experience of spiritual realities. She articulates a large context which made it possible for liturgy to have this effect, including habitual discipline of penance and the annual cycle of liturgical observance, and the bitter dialectic of controversy, a global context of spiritual formation that, she maintains, was a major innovation of the Carolingian Renaissance.

Still, the supreme performance art of liturgy, combining words and visual images, could only function as an enigmatic mirror reflecting the inexpressible realities that would be seen in the apocalypse of the Last Times. Three papers underscore what were thought to be the limits of the possible in discerning and representing the invisible (understood as the numinous). These include Diebold's consideration of idolatry as a continuing fascination and danger and the studies by Dutton and Morrison of Eriugena's devaluation of physical vision in the soul's passage through levels of perfection to the climax of seeing the invisible God.

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When all was said and done, seeing the invisible, as passing beyond the material into the immaterial world (or rather perceiving the immaterial that encompassed and was enfolded within the material) was possible only in the moment of experience, and not by recapitulations teasingly provided by words and pictures. After all, words and pictures laboured under severe disabilities as channels to reality. Horace's saying that poetry was like painting in the

imitation of nature never went entirely out of vogue. And yet, painting could not convey movement. It was unnatural in that it froze actions, like a snapshot, in mid-air, and fixed the attention on that one, isolated instant. It was mute. Being discursive, poetry, and language in general, could not convey the intense focus of a moment; its revelations could only come in sequence, and not in one blinding instantaneous perception. Word-play was unnatural in that it required an artificial skill, the learned facility in language and, often even more, a discerning vocabulary and grammatical correctness, not to say also a logical consistence of parts of speech. In speaking, language dilated and diffused the attention, rather than focusing it. Of course, dividing the peoples as it had since the Tower of Babel, it had no such claim to being a “universal language” as did visual arts.

Even *ekphrasis* (the rhetorical technique developed and honed to stimulate pictures in the mind) had limited powers as a translator between media. For speakers had vivid experience of hearers left cold by their words, and of hearers who translated their words into images quite other than those intended by the speakers, perverse images evoked by insanity, wandering fallacies, or demonic illusions. Following where the Sophists led, theorists of rhetoric recognized that speech could not convey to hearers’ minds images as they were in the minds of speakers and, indeed, that such discrepancies could push hearer’s emotions in ways alarmingly unanticipated and undesired by speakers. Such was the normal disconnection in discourse between adherents of the institutional Church and those they condemned as heretics and unbelievers.

There is a caution for modern scholars in the latitude given for creative misunderstanding of the invisible through words and pictorial images; for, at least in the ninth century, communication practised in their daily lives by makers and consumers of such evidence as is reviewed in this book always expressed only part of the message. Quite normally, what was obvious in the message went along with an essential cryptic content. Secrecy was an essential cement in the court societies of the early Middle Ages, when the written word was always set in the context of the spoken word. The producers and consumers of verbal texts and visual arts consolidated their personal loyalties and factional interests with secrecy, “privileging and empowering a select few by virtue of their access to and protection of ‘the hidden’ ”.⁶ Concealment, and even deception, to keep the unwanted at bay were more than a constant in daily life and communication. They were paradigmatic techniques of authorship that exegetes found when they turned to Scripture and vexed their minds

⁶ P.E. DUTTON, *Charlemagne’s Mustache and Other Cultural Clusters of a Dark Age* (New York, 2004), esp. pp. 130, 146-147.

to decipher the message that, they believed, God, the original and greatest Author, hid from the profane beneath so many types and shadows, and that, by grace alone, he revealed to his friends.

Part I:
Late Antiquity

“Truly Visible Things Are Manifest Images of Invisible Things”: Dionysios the Areopagite on Knowing the Invisible

ANDREW LOUTH

What I want to do in this paper is to try and explore the way in which Dionysios contributes to a change in the understanding of the place of the visual and visual images in the Byzantine East between the period of the great Fathers of the fourth and fifth centuries – especially the Cappadocian Fathers – and the period of the iconoclast controversy and the defence of the making and veneration of images found in St John Damascene. For it seems to me that there is a manifest shift in the assessment of the visual, and also that Dionysios plays a role in this shift of perception. The role, though crucial, was far from being unambiguous, the multivalency of this shift of perception being the key to its protean effects in different schools of thought and, in fact, to the status it gained as a *locus classicus*. How conscious anyone was of this shift is difficult to ascertain, as appeal to tradition has the effect of covering one's tracks even from oneself. Indeed, what I am doing is something invited by the iconodule sources themselves, though this invitation has rarely, if ever, been taken up. For fundamental to the iconodule defence, especially in the eighth century, was appeal to the authority of the Fathers, amongst whom the Cappadocian Fathers, especially Basil the Great and his brother Gregory of Nyssa, and Dionysios the Areopagite figured prominently. Indeed, the quotation that I have used in my title is taken immediately, not from Dionysios' tenth letter, but from the lengthy florilegium of patristic citations that John Damascene appended to his third and most systematic defence of the making and veneration of icons: this quotation from Dionysios is the very first citation,

heading the list. If we refer to its context in the tenth letter of Dionysios, ostensibly written to John the Apostle and Theologian, we immediately encounter the different perspectives that the Damascene is seeking to align in his patristic florilegium. For in context, Dionysios' assertion here seems to have little to do with the understanding of icons John seeks to promote. What Dionysios means by this assertion, to judge by the argument in which he places it, is that what happens in this world here below is an image of invisible truth, and in particular that those who oppose the gospel in the present age, by persecuting the apostles, will find themselves separated from God in the invisible realms of eternity, and conversely that those who live lives dedicated to God here already "live like angels among men". There is nothing directly about visual images at all. Nevertheless, this passage was regarded as crucial for other eight-century defenders of icons: following John, it was also cited by Hadrian I in his letter to Angilbert of St Riquier (the "*Hadrianum*"), to defend the veneration of icons.¹ For the defenders of icons against the iconoclasts, this quotation affirmed a central principle: that visible images provided authentic access to the invisible. John of Damascus, in particular, tries to make the whole controversy turn on two issues: the nature of the image, and the nature of veneration. For him, any theological understanding at all was dependent on the notion of the image. In a remarkable passage in his first treatise against the iconoclasts, repeated in a more systematic form in his third treatise,² John makes a careful distinction between the different forms of the image, demonstrating that it provides an essential concept for understanding the doctrine of the Trinity and the relationship between God and the world, and especially human kind, created in his image, a key to biblical interpretation, as well as furnishing ways by which, through narrative and pictorial depiction, we could recall the events and people of the past through which and whom God had revealed himself and his power. In this way the concept of image is seen to be embedded in the very nature of theology. The citation from Dionysios sums up, for the Damascene and the Pope, that principle.

¹ A letter I completely misunderstood in my article, "St Denys the Areopagite and the iconoclast controversy", in: *Denys l'Aréopagite et sa postérité en orient et en occident*, ed. Y. DE ANDIA, (Paris, 1997), pp. 327-39, on p. 335. For an accurate account of Hadrian's defence of icons, see B. NEIL, "The Western reaction to the Council of Nicaea II", *Journal of Theological Studies*, N.S. 51 (2000), pp. 533-552.

² *On the Divine Images* I. 9-13; cf. III. 16-23. The text of *On the Divine Images*, as *Contra imaginum calumniators orationes tres* is generally known in English, is that prepared by Bonifatius KOTTER for his edition of the prose works of John Damascene (*Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, 3 (Berlin, 1975: *Patristische Texte und Studien* 17)), and the translation my own: John of Damascus, *Three Treatises on the Divine Images* (Crestwood, NY, 2003).

We find the same kind of disjunction – between apparent original intention and perceived significance – if we look at the other citations John Damascene provides in his florilegia. In the case of the citations from the Cappadocian Fathers (and also their contemporary John Chrysostom), the disjunction appears like this: the Damascene cites the Cappadocians for their appeal to visual imagery, but that was, in fact, a rhetorical appeal to visual imagery. Take, for example, the first citation he provides from Basil the Great:

Rise up now for me, O radiant painters of athletic achievements, and magnify the mutilated image of the general [Barlaam, the martyr about whom Basil is preaching] by your arts. The context in which he was crowned, described more dimly by me, you make radiant with the colours of your wisdom. Overwhelmed by you, I will refrain from describing the martyr's deeds of valour. I see the struggle depicted most exactly by you, with his hand in the fire; I see the combatant, radiant with joy, depicted in your image. Let the demons howl, as they are now struck down by the valiant deeds of the martyrs now manifest in you. Let the burning hand be once again shown as victorious over them. May Christ, the judge of the contest, inscribe them on his list, to whom be glory to the ages.³

What Basil is doing here is appealing to his audience to imagine a picture of the martyr, holding the burning incense in his hand, and refusing to let it drop on the pagan altar over which his hand is held. He invokes the greater realism of a painted picture *as a rhetorical device*: his appeal to visual imagery is part of his rhetorical craft. Basil and other fourth-century Fathers use visual images rhetorically: they are a starting point for the practice of *ekphrasis*, in which, by appealing to the greater vividness of pictorial depictions, they summon up images in the minds of their audience, so that by their rhetorical skill they harness the immediacy of visual impact (notice the present tense – "I see the struggle ... I see the combatant" – and the reference to the demons "now struck down" by the emulation of the martyrs' deeds evoked by the recollection of their deeds). Ekphrasis replaces the pictorial images it conjures up⁴ – and so in that sense scarcely serves the Damascene's argument at all – but nonetheless it is through the mediation of images that understanding is conveyed: and that was the point the Damascene drew from these citations.

³ John Damascene, *On the Divine Images*, I. 34 = II. 30 = III. 46.

⁴ As Jaś ELSNER puts it: *ekphrasis* "was not intended (as modern descriptions are) to go beside and to supplement the real painting or statue being described; it was intended to *replace* the sculpture or painting" (*Art and the Roman Viewer* (Cambridge, 1995), p. 24; italics in original).

I am tempted to describe the transition that has taken place between the Cappadocian Fathers and John Damascene as the transition from a rhetorical culture to a more straightforwardly visual culture, from a culture in which truths are conveyed by rhetorically constructed sermons, in which visual imagery plays an important part, to a culture in which it is important to affirm that truths are conveyed both “by word of mouth *and* image”, to quote the conclusion the Damascene repeatedly draws in the earliest of his florilegia, where he generally comments on the significance of the passages he cites.⁵ It seems to me that in this transition Dionysios the Areopagite played a fundamental role; this I want to explore now.

To begin with, notice how visual Dionysios’ imagination is. In *Ep.* 10 from which we took our opening citation, Dionysios goes on to refer to “John’s all-shining ray”: what John the ‘Theologian, Apostle and Evangelist’ is famous for is what he wrote – the Gospel, Epistles and Apocalypse – but this is, for Dionysios, summed up in a visual image of radiance.⁶ It is, in fact, striking how little use Dionysios makes of the carefully crafted language of Christian Orthodoxy, to the fashioning of which the rhetorical training of the Fathers had contributed greatly. The careful distinctions in terms of which the doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation were now expressed find little explicit mention in Dionysios’ works: he does, it is true, use the term *hypostasis* a couple of times in relation to the Trinity, and it seems to me (though not to all) that what he has to say in his own way represents pretty accurately the Cappadocian understanding of the Trinity, but his imagery is visual: three lamps, the light of which merges into one, or the Son and the Spirit as “divine blossoms, flowers, as it were, and transcendent lights”⁷ – not only visual, but also of Neoplatonic inspiration. The same is, it seems to me, true of his references to Scripture: what he lists from Scripture are depictions – of God and angels, and events – he has much less to say about its teaching, and when he does – for instance, when he speaks of God’s love – it is again visual language of movement, going out and embracing everything and then returning and drawing everything to itself, that

⁵ Cf. *On the Divine Images*, I. 38, 41, 45, 47.

⁶ The text used for the *Corpus Dionysiacum* is that edited by B.R. SUCHLA, G. HEIL and A.M. RITTER, 2 vols. (Berlin, 1990–1991: *Patristische Texte und Studien* 33, 36). In the references to the works, *DN* = *De Divinis Nominibus*, *MT* = *De Mystica Theologia*, *CH* = *De Coelesti Hierarchia*, *EH* = *De Ecclesiastica Hierarchia*, I have frequently used C. LUTHEID’s translation in: *Pseudo-Dionysius, The Complete Works* (Mahwah NY, 1987), but sometimes modified it or made my own.

⁷ *DN* 2. 7.

he uses, a movement he finds reflected in the circular movement of the bishop as he goes round the church, censuring it.⁸

It is not surprising, then, that beauty, the beautiful, is all-pervasive in Dionysian corpus, and that it is an important aspect of the influence of Dionysios, so that Hans Urs von Balthasar speaks of "his deepest influence, the clear, realized synthesis of truth and beauty, of theology and aesthetics, which was never wholly lost even in the driest realms of the schools".⁹ The ranks of the celestial hierarchy, and the orders of the clergy and laity in the earthly church, and not least, the performance of the sacred rites: all of these radiate beauty, and indeed effect beauty. To quote Dionysios, speaking of the ultimate beauty, which is God, the cause of all:

From this beauty comes the existence of everything, each being exhibiting its own way of beauty. For beauty is the cause of harmony, of sympathy, of community. Beauty unites all things and is the source of all things. It is the great creating cause which bestirs the world and holds all things in existence by the longing inside them to have beauty. And there it is ahead of all as Goal, as the Beloved, as the Cause toward which all things move, since it is the longing for beauty which actually brings them into being.¹⁰

It is all this that the hierarchies manifest and effect – within the Church, through the ceremonies of the liturgy. Dionysios uses the word play on *kallos*, beauty, and *kalein*, to call, found in Plato and Proklos: "beauty calls all things to itself (whence it is called beauty) and gathers everything into itself".¹¹ Though he does not use the word, he sees the whole cosmos, both visible and invisible, as a theophany: a manifestation of God, in which God is calling the whole order of things "after him" back into union with him. But the word play robs the word *kalein* of its aural significance: this is not something heard, but something seen, and the very vision draws the beholder towards it, it is something like the pull a magnet exerts on iron. But not just towards it, but to what is manifest through it. Dionysios does not accept – indeed he implicitly, though firmly, rejects – Proklos' idea that self-reverting beings are causes of themselves and all that emanates from them, but that is because he clings firmly – maybe more so than Proklos – to Plotinus' insight that beauty is something lent from beyond, a radiance that discloses through the beautiful thing the grace of a higher realm.

⁸ Cf. *DN* 4. 14 and *EH* 3. 2 (ed. HEIL, 80. 8-10); cf. 3. 3. 3 (ed. HEIL, 82. 13-83. 10).

⁹ H.U. VON BALTHASAR, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics*, 3 vols. (Edinburgh, 1982-1986), 2 p. 148.

¹⁰ *DN* 4. 7.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

It is in accordance with his notion of human perception of the divine as a response to the call of beauty that he thinks of the human response not just as acknowledgment in terms of theologically orthodox confession, but rather as going beyond such acknowledgment to praise and worship. It has been noticed by many (first by one of the scholiasts to the Dionysian corpus) that Dionysios speaks not so much of attributing qualities to God (*kategorēin*), as of praising God through the names we ascribe to him (*hymnein*).¹² This again is a theme in which Dionysios draws on both pagan and Christian antecedents, but it is a theme – with its powerful liturgical associations – echoes of which and variations on which are rarely less than palpable in his writings. To quote Balthasar again: “the style strides along so consciously loaded, draped with so many sacred garments, that it makes any haste impossible and compels us not only to follow him in his train of thought but also to join with him in his mood of celebration”.¹³

This visual luxuriance savoured in words is not, however, there for its own sake: its purpose is to draw human kind, and indeed the whole cosmos, towards the radiance that shines through it and bestows on it the quality of beauty. How does this take place? Dionysios expresses his understanding of this ascent to the origin in two ways: one a general theme, the other a more precise discussion. The general theme is the way the hierarchies perform their task of effecting assimilation to God by means of purification, illumination and union – *katharsis*, *photismos*, *henosis*. Dionysios never explains exactly what he means by these terms, though he clearly envisages a progression from purification, through illumination, to final union: purification being separation from sin and any attachment to the particular or material that draws one away from God; illumination involving both instruction in the requirements of the faith, and more deeply a growing transparency to the divine light; union entailing a state of such transfiguration in the divine light that scarcely any distinction between God and the soul can be discerned. More clearly, however, this threefold process is the function of hierarchy, reflected in its threefold structures: the whole process of hierarchy reaching out into the manifold has the purpose of drawing the manifold back into union, of completing the cycle of procession and return. The visual, therefore, is important precisely because it is an image, pointing beyond to the source of its beauty.

The precise discussion is found in chapter 2 of the *Celestial Hierarchy*, where Dionysios considers the two ways in which symbols work: by similarity

¹² *Scholia in Divinis Nominibus*, v. 8, ed. in: *PG*, 4, col. 328A. Noted by J.-L. MARION in his *L'Idole et la distance* (Paris, 1977; 2nd edn. Paris, 1991), p. 190, and n. 24.

¹³ BALTHASAR, *Glory of the Lord*, p. 172.

and by dissimilarity. Symbols can be like that which they symbolize, as when we use reason or mind or being as symbols of the divine. Symbols can, however, be unlike what they symbolize, as when angelic beings are described as oxen or eagles or flaming wheels whirling in the skies. Dionysios points out that the Scriptures mainly use unlike symbols, symbols obviously incongruous with that to which they are applied. And with good reason: for if the Scriptures described the invisible realm of the heavens using like symbols, we would too easily form a conception of the heavenly beings – as Dionysios slyly puts it, we might well be misled into "thinking that the heavenly beings are golden or gleaming men, glamorous, wearing lustrous clothing, giving off flames that do no harm"¹⁴ – but there is no danger of that, if we see that the symbols used are obviously incongruous.

For the purpose of these visual symbols is not to depict, for they are symbols of what is beyond depiction: their purpose is to effect a process of *anagogê*, ascent or better 'uplifting', for it is a process in which we are passive, not an achievement. Dionysios' attitude to incongruous symbols is rather like Origen's attitude to contradictions in the scriptural record (and it is likely that Dionysios was consciously indebted to Origen here), which serve to force the reader to push beyond the surface meaning of the text, which makes no sense in its own terms. That means, incidentally, that any imagery can be used of God, so long as we recognize its shortcomings, and indeed that theology is more expressive if it luxuriates in the wealth of symbolism, than if it seeks to develop some symbolism that applies more or less directly to God.

This understanding of the limitation of human language about God leads Dionysios to make a more general point: that in relation to God our affirmations always need qualification, in contrast to our negations, as when we say that God is not knowable, not limited, not visible. To quote him: "This second way of talking about him seems to me much more appropriate, for, as the secret and sacred tradition has instructed, God is in no way like the things that have being and we have no knowledge at all of this incomprehensible and ineffable transcendence and invisibility".¹⁵ Like and unlike symbolism is presented by Dionysios as a special case – applying to (mostly) visual imagery (Dionysios is aware of other kinds of symbolism – the symbolism of sound (music) and of smell (scent) – which seem less problematic to him, possibly because we are much less adept at "reading" the significance of such symbolism) of what he elsewhere calls "affirmative (kataphatic) and negative (apophatic) theologies".¹⁶

¹⁴ CH 2. 3.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Cf. MT 3.

The terminology of kataphatic and apophatic theology was to become very popular in Byzantine theology, though in Dionysios himself such language only occurs occasionally. It is, as is well known, language borrowed by Dionysios from his Neoplatonic contemporaries, especially Proklos. For both Proklos and Dionysios, the two forms of theology belong together, not, however, in the way they are presented in Scholastic theology, where negative theology appears as a corrective to affirmative theology, guiding it in some way towards its goal. They belong together because access to the divine realm is only possible if the divine discloses itself, as it has done for Proklos in the Platonic dialogues and the Chaldean Oracles, and for Dionysios in the Christian Scriptures. This self-disclosure is to be affirmed, but then it is recognized that God or the One is beyond anything we affirm through our concepts, so that we trace our way back into the divine realm by denying our affirmations. Dionysios puts this process in a typically celebratory way:

The fact that the more we take flight upward, the more our words are confined in the ideas we are capable of forming; so that now as we plunge into that darkness which is beyond intellect, we shall find ourselves not simply running short of words but actually speechless and unknowing. In the earlier books my argument travelled downward from the most exalted to the humblest categories, taking in on this downward path an ever-increasing number of ideas which multiplied with every stage of the descent. But my argument now rises from what is below up to the transcendent, and the more it climbs, the more language falters, and when it has passed up and beyond the ascent, it will turn silent completely, since it will finally be at one with him who is indescribable.¹⁷

Dionysios' understanding of how imagery or symbolism – mainly visual, as we have seen – works should have posed enormous problems for the iconodules, for both his insistence that our ascent to God and assimilation to him effected by the radiant theophanic imagery of the Scriptures take place through a process that includes purification, and his preference for unlike symbolism and apophatic theology render the images themselves almost literally ambivalent. Even if images are necessary for human minds to form some conception of the invisible realm – as he affirms frequently – the way the human mind interprets these images involves a process of both affirmation and denial. The purified mind passes beyond images, and the preference for unlike symbolism suggests that the way in which images disclose that of which they are images is highly indirect. Indeed, Dionysios' preference for unlike symbolism might be thought

¹⁷ MT 3.

to lend support to an abstract religious imagery quite unlike that found in icons. It might, in passing, be thought that it is the appreciation of Dionysios' approach here that led to the embracing of a style of icon painting that prescind from the realistic, even though what little reflection on the meaning of icons we find in the Byzantine period seems to be inspired by quite straightforwardly realistic canons.¹⁸

In fact, however, there is no trace in the writings of the iconodules that they have any problem with Dionysios, and even though Dionysios' preference for unlike symbolism might have provided grist to the iconoclast mill, there is precious little evidence that the iconoclasts made any use of this.¹⁹ What the iconodules took from Dionysios was his insistence that the visible provides access to the invisible: "truly visible things are manifest images of invisible things", or what seems to have become the favourite Dionysian quotation during the second phase of the iconoclast controversy: "the truth is in the likeness, the archetype in the image, each in the other, apart from the difference of substance".²⁰ And this provided a direct justification for the icon as opening on to the invisible world. Theodore of Stoudios directly appeals to Dionysios – or a Dionysian manner of thinking – in justification both of the use of images and of the use of the imagination, through which such images may be understood:

To speak in a Dionysian manner (*Dionysiakôs eipein*), [it is by images that we] ascend to intellectual contemplations ... Imagination is then one of the five faculties of the soul, and imagination itself seems to be a kind of image; for they are both manifestations. The image is not unprofitable, therefore, since it is a help to the imagination. If the image were unprofitable, then the imagination which depends on it and co-exists with it would be even more useless, and if it were useless, then so too would be the faculties that co-exist with it – the senses, opinion, understanding, the intellect.²¹

The making of images and understanding by means of images are, it is suggested, an essential element in human understanding, for the human is more

¹⁸ Though this "realism" is significantly different from what we might regard as realistic: see H. MAGUIRE, *The Icons of their Bodies: Saints and Their Images in Byzantium* (Princeton, NJ, 1996).

¹⁹ Contrary to what I argued in my article cited above.

²⁰ Dionysios, *EH* 4. 3. 1, discussed in my article cited above, p. 333.

²¹ *Ep.* 380, lines 167-173, in: *Theodori Studitae Epistulae*, ed. G. FATOUROS, 2 vols. (Berlin, 1991: *Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae* 31), 2, p. 517 (translation somewhat paraphrased in the interests of intelligibility).

than simply a pure intellect. Dionysios was too much of a Neoplatonist to think that, but the place he gave to visual imagery in the human ascent to understanding of God is given ampler significance in the thought of the iconodules.

There is not time now to explore why Dionysios' focus on visual imagery paved the way for the essential role that visual images came to assume in both human understanding in general, and human knowledge of God and the spiritual world in particular, in iconodule thought. Contributory factors must be, it seems to me, the decline in the rhetorical culture still alive and well in the fourth and fifth centuries. This decline was manifest, among other things, in what appears to be a change in the homily from the living rhetorical exercise we find in the Cappadocians and John Chrysostom to the much more formal and also more liturgical confection we find from the sixth century onwards. Perhaps it was caused by the changing political structures of Roman Empire, as the last vestiges of the power of the educated elite vanished, to be replaced by power centralized on the imperial court, justified in religious terms, and projected in the visual imagery of the icon that comes to assume much greater prominence in the course of the sixth century. Such a decline in rhetorical culture goes hand-in-hand with the eventual collapse of the educational system in the East, whatever the causal relationship between the two. More positively, there is the change that one can see in Maximos the Confessor, very much, I would argue, influenced by Dionysios here, whereby the technical language of Christology is used to build up an image of Christ through which Christ himself is encountered. All this creates a context in which visual imagery assumes such significance as both to provoke the iconoclast controversy, and also to ensure the ultimate defeat of iconoclasm.

Dionysios is then, I would argue, a pivotal figure in the development of the role of visual imagery in understanding and communicating any understanding of God in the early Byzantine period. For he provided an analysis of the way (primarily) visual imagery was to be interpreted that was ideally suited to serve the more dialectical nature theology came to assume from the sixth century onwards. In this development, although appeal to visual imagery remained a constant, how it operated and what it implied about human understanding underwent fundamental change.

Relics, Rhetoric and Mental Spectacles in Late Ancient Christianity

PATRICIA COX MILLER

What can I say? What shall I speak? I'm jumping with excitement and aflame with a frenzy that is better than common sense. I'm flying and dancing and floating on air and, for the rest, drunk under the influence of spiritual pleasure".¹ Thus did John Chrysostom open a homily on relics in about 401 CE in a martyrium outside Constantinople.² His emotion is palpable. Indeed, in another homily, also delivered in the presence of relics, Chrysostom indicated that the spectacle of viewing that occurred in *martyria* ought to have a visible effect on the body of the venerator, producing more than 'spiritual' acrobatics as in the passage above.

My point is that in the same way that those who descend from the theatres reveal to all that they've been thrown into turmoil, confused, enervated through the images they bear of everything that took place there, the person returning from viewing martyrs should be recognizable to all – through their gaze, their appearance, their gait, their compunction, their composed thoughts. [They should be] breathing fire, restrained, contrite, sober, vigilant – announcing the spiritual life within through the movements of their body Let's always return from martyrs, from spiritual incense, from heavenly meadows, from new and wonderful spectacles (θεαμάτων καινῶν καὶ παραδόξων) in this way ³

¹ John Chrysostom, *Homily Delivered After the Remains of the Martyrs*, ed. PG 63, col. 467; tr. W. MAYER and P. ALLEN, *John Chrysostom* (London, 2000), p. 86.

² For dating and context, see MAYER and ALLEN, *John Chrysostom*, pp. 85-86.

³ *A Homily on Martyrs*, ed. PG 50, col. 666; tr. MAYER and ALLEN, *John Chrysostom*, p. 97.

Indicating by his negative contrast with the effects of secular theatre-going that the seeing connected with relics is a new – chaste – theatre, Chrysostom credited the Christian spectacle with a remarkable, and very physical, transformative power.⁴ So great is that power – “the grace of the Spirit ... accompanies these bones” – that it affects not only the bodies of venerators, but also their clothing, shoes, and even their shadows!⁵

What kind of seeing produced so dramatic an effect? In these two homilies preached at the tombs of martyrs, Chrysostom briefly implied that there were the following two kinds of seeing. On the one hand, while urging his audience to “stay beside the tomb of the martyr”, he advised them at the same time to “immerse yourself perpetually in the stories of his struggles”.⁶ This suggests that the ‘spectacle’ was a form of visionary storytelling in which the drama signified by the martyr’s bones was enacted in the beholder’s mind. On the other hand, Chrysostom used metaphors of light to indicate the power of the spectacle: in the tomb are “bones that reflect the very rays of the sun. No, rather they release flashes of light that are more brilliant So great even is the power of the ashes of the saints that it doesn’t just sit inside the remains, but extends beyond them”, repelling demons and sanctifying the faithful.⁷ By engaging in this sort of rhetorical dazzle, Chrysostom tried to capture what was visually intractable, the spiritual power flowing from bones and ashes.

In a remarkable passage in his *Discourse on the Blessed Babylas*, Chrysostom brought out the full import of the connection between relics and vision by describing “the power that they have to excite a similar zeal in the souls of those who behold them”. Here is the whole passage:

If anyone approaches such a tomb, he immediately receives a distinct impression of this energy. For the sight of the coffin, entering the soul, acts upon it and affects it in such a way that it feels as if it sees the one who lies there joining in prayer and drawing nigh. Afterwards, one who has had this experience returns from there filled with great zeal and [is] a changed person This vision (*φαντασία*) of the dead enters the souls of the living ... as if they saw instead of the tomb those who lie in

⁴ For a thorough discussion of Chrysostom’s attack on the theatre, see B. LEYERLE, *Theatrical Shows and Ascetic Lives: John Chrysostom’s attack on spiritual marriage* (Berkeley, 2001).

⁵ *Homily Delivered After the Remains of the Martyrs*, ed. in: PG 63, col. 469; tr. MAYER and ALLEN, *John Chrysostom*, p. 88.

⁶ *A Homily on Martyrs*, ed. in: PG 50, col. 664; tr. MAYER and ALLEN, *John Chrysostom*, p. 96.

⁷ *Homily Delivered After the Remains of the Martyrs*, ed. PG 63, col. 469; tr. MAYER and ALLEN, *John Chrysostom*, p. 87.

the tomb standing up And why speak of the location of a grave? Many times, in fact, the sight of a garment alone and the recollection of a word of the dead move the soul and restore the failing memory. For this reason God has left us the relics of the saints.⁸

In one of his catechetical sermons, Chrysostom had remarked that faith consists in seeing the invisible as if it were visible, and this indeed is the perspective that underlies the passage above.⁹ As Mary Carruthers has observed about Chrysostom's view of spiritual seeing, "the crucial power of the saint lies in the ability of his site/sight to enter the soul (through the eye), affect it and so cause one to feel as if one sees the saint himself – both in the mind's eye and heartfully".¹⁰ Although Chrysostom sometimes distinguished between the 'eyes of the flesh' and the 'eyes of faith', in this passage physical sight cooperates in endowing the soul with a set of mental spectacles, as it were, with which to envision the saint, and the fleshly eye ("at the sight of a garment alone") also cooperates in bringing back to mind the storytelling spectacle, an experience that seems crucial to Chrysostom's view of this form of insight.¹¹

Chrysostom's reflections suggest that being in *martyria*, in the presence of relics, provided visual stimulants for engaging an active theological imagination. His presentation of the veneration of martyrs and their relics as a spectacle was not idiosyncratic, nor was his rhetorical enhancement of ritual practice confined to Christianity in the Greek-speaking eastern empire. In the late fourth and early fifth centuries, authors writing in Latin as well as in Greek elaborated a set of culturally-shared ideas and practices with regard to the cult of relics that cut across linguistic difference. This study is devoted to a group of

⁸ *Discourse on the Blessed Babylas and Against the Greeks* 65-66, in: Jean Chrysostome: *Discours sur Babylas*, ed. and French tr. M.A. SCHATKIN (Paris, 1990: SC 362), pp. 174-176; English tr. M.A. SCHATKIN, *St. John Chrysostom, Apologist* (Washington, DC, 1985: *Fathers of the Church* 73), pp. 112-113.

⁹ *Baptismal Catecheses* 2. 9, in: Jean Chrysostome: *Huit catéchèses baptismales inédites*, ed. and tr. A. WENGER (Paris, 1957: SC 50), p. 138. For discussion, see G. FRANK, " 'Taste and see': The eucharist and the eyes of Faith in the fourth century", *Church History* 70 (2001), p. 635.

¹⁰ M. CARRUTHERS, *The Craft of Thought: Meditation, Rhetoric, and the Making of Images, 400-1200* (Cambridge, 1998: *Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature* 34), p. 49.

¹¹ For Chrysostom's distinction between the two kinds of eyes, see, e.g. *Baptismal Catecheses* 3. 3. 9-22, in: Jean Chrysostome: *Trois catéchèses baptismales*, ed. and tr. A. PIÉDAGNEL (Paris, 1990: SC 366), pp. 220-222. As FRANK, " 'Taste and See' ", convincingly demonstrates, Chrysostom's goal was "not to reject bodily perceptions but to learn how to see more clearly and attentively through them" (p. 636); further, "[t]he mind's ability to generate the needed mental images was critical for the eyes of faith" (p. 637).

Christian authors writing in Latin whose ideas about martyrs, relics, and the ritual practices associated with them were remarkably consonant with those of Chrysostom. Thus I have structured my presentation of these authors' views by aligning them with three features of Chrysostom's martyr-discourse, so succinct and expressive of the ingredients that combined to produce the visionary atmosphere that was central to the cult of relics in late ancient Christianity.

Those three features of Chrysostom's writing on martyrs – theatrical rhetoric, the insertion of the venerator into the martyrial narrative, and the use of metaphors of light – will be used to explore the contributions of Augustine of Hippo, Prudentius of Calahorra, and Victricius of Rouen, all major players, with Chrysostom, in the development of the visionary literature that evoked the spiritual power of saints at the sites of their relics. First, theatrical rhetoric as well as an understanding of relic-veneration as mental theatre will be the point of entry for engaging Augustine's position, concentrating primarily on his sermons on martyrs. Second, the view that the venerator at the shrine becomes part of the text, as it were, of the martyrial narrative, not only by being invaded by a vision of the dead but also by turning a physical landscape into a spiritual one, will be the point of entry for discussing Prudentius's *Peristephanon*. And third, a reliance on metaphors of light to evoke the power and presence of the saint in and around his relics will be the point of entry for considering the views of Victricius in his sermon *De laude sanctorum*. In their own ways, all three of these authors were, in effect, theorists as well as participants in the cult of relics, and all three 'saw' the invisible by using verbal imagery to express an abstraction, that is, the belief that relics were conduits of divine power.

Augustine and Mental Theatre

Augustine was shocked by the sensuous ambience that often characterized celebrations of the feast days of martyrs. He found the drinking offensive, referring sarcastically in a sermon on the martyr Lawrence to those who, having had their bottles blessed at the martyrrium, came back "soaked from the memorials of the martyrs"; in Augustine's view, such people were persecutors rather than venerators.¹² But he seems to have been especially annoyed by the dancing. In a sermon given in the Mappalia basilica in Carthage, he spoke against "the pestilential rowdiness of dancers" (as well as their "impious

¹² *Serm.* 305A. 4; text in: *Miscellanea Agostiniana*, ed. G. MORIN, 1 (Rome, 1930), p. 58 [hereafter cited as *MA*]; tr. E. HILL, OP, *The Works of Saint Augustine, Part III – Sermons*, 8 (Hyde Park and New York, 1994) [hereafter cited as *Sermons III/8*], pp. 326-327.

singing”) that had profaned “such a holy place as this, where the body lies of such a holy martyr” (Cyprian).¹³

Such rowdiness, Augustine went on to note thankfully, no longer occurred but, as though anticipating a rebuke from Scripture, he quoted and then reinterpreted a version of Mt 11, 17 (“We have sung to you, and you have not danced?”). The non-dancers in this verse, as Augustine correctly noted, are being rebuked by the singers; what then is the proper song, and how shall one dance in honour of the martyr? “Our song”, Augustine preached, is an ascetic song, and he quoted 1 John 2. 15-17, a passage that condemns love of the world, and particularly “the lust of the flesh (*concupiscentia carnis*) and the lust of the eyes (*concupiscentia oculorum*)”.¹⁴ Here is the form of dancing that he recommended:

What a song that is, my brothers and sisters! You’ve heard me singing it, let me hear you dancing to it; see that you all do, by keeping time with your morals, what dancers do by keeping time with their bodies and their feet. Do this inwardly (*intus hoc agite*); let your moral attitudes match that song. Let cupidity, greed, be uprooted, charity, love planted.¹⁵

Augustine’s solution for the problem of riotous celebration is to direct the celebration inward, so that the rhythm of physical movement becomes the beat of a virtuous disposition. This involved more than a rhetorical sleight of hand on Augustine’s part: he was engaged in retraining the senses to apprehend the meaning of martyrs and their relics.

Redirecting the lust of the eyes was of paramount importance in this endeavour. Like many others in antiquity, Augustine thought that the eye was active rather than passive. He described the mechanics of seeing, now called the theory of extramission, as follows:

In this very body which we carry around with us, I can find something whose inexpressible swiftness astonishes me; the ray from our eye, with which we touch whatever we behold. What you see, after all, is what you touch with the ray from your eye.¹⁶

¹³ *Serm.* 311. 5, ed. *PL* 38, col. 1415; tr. E. HILL, OP, *The Works of Saint Augustine, Part III – Sermons*, 9 (Hyde Park and New York, 1994) [hereafter cited as *Sermons III/9*], p. 73.

¹⁴ *Serm.* 311. 5-6, ed. *PL* 38, col. 1416; tr. *Sermons III/9*, p. 73.

¹⁵ *Serm.* 311. 7, ed. *PL* 38, col. 1416; tr. *Sermons III/9*, p. 74.

¹⁶ *Serm.* 277. 10, ed. *PL* 38, col. 1262; tr. *Sermons III/8*, p. 38. See also Augustine, *De Genesi ad litteram* [hereafter cited as *De Gen. ad lit.*] 12. 16. 32: “Light, the finest element in bodies and hence more akin to soul than the others, is first of all diffused in a pure state through the eyes and shines forth in rays from the eyes to behold visible objects” (tr. J.H. TAYLOR, SJ, *St.*

Seeing was thus connective and embodied: there was “a certain participatory dimension in the visual process, a potential intertwining of viewer and viewed”.¹⁷ This kind of seeing, however, could be intrusive and dangerous: in Graeco-Roman culture, seeing could be doing, because the eye could wither, devour, and de-soul the object of its gaze.¹⁸ Indeed, in the myth of Narcissus, the eye could even consume the self, and Plutarch discussed the self-bewitching capacity of the gaze.¹⁹

If, by virtue of the eye’s touch, the act of seeing was performative, as Nelson has argued, one had to be careful where one directed one’s gaze.²⁰ Like John Chrysostom, Augustine engaged the problem of the lust of the eyes precisely on the topic of performance. In a sermon preached in Carthage at the table of St. Cyprian (the shrine erected at the spot where he was executed), Augustine admonished his audience as follows:

What evils vulgar, shameless curiosity is the cause of, the lust of the eyes, the avid craving for frivolous shows and spectacles, the madness of the stadiums, the fighting of contests for no reward! ... Is this the way it is, then, that vile baseness delights the decent man? You can also change your consuming addiction to shows and spectacles; the Church is offering your mind more honest and venerable spectacles. Just now the passion of the blessed Cyprian was being read. We were listening with our ears, observing it all with our minds; we could see him competing, somehow or other we felt afraid for him in his deadly peril, but we were hoping God would help him.²¹

Augustine: The Literal Meaning of Genesis, 2 vols. (New York, 1982: *Ancient Christian Writers* 41-42), 2, p. 199). On the theory of extramission, see D.C. LINDBERG, *Theories of Vision from Al-Kindi to Kepler* (Chicago, 1976); R.S. NELSON, “Introduction: Descartes’ cow and other domestications of the visual”, in: *Visuality Before and Beyond the Renaissance: Seeing as Others Saw*, ed. R.S. NELSON (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 1-21, esp. pp. 4-5, on extramission and seeing as connective.

¹⁷ M. JAY, *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought* (Berkeley, 1993), p. 30.

¹⁸ On the malevolent power of the eye, see C.A. BARTON, “Being in the eyes: Shame and sight in ancient Rome”, in: *The Roman Gaze: Vision, Power, and the Body*, ed. D. FREDRICK (Baltimore, 2002), pp. 216-235; EAD., *The Sorrows of the Ancient Romans: The Gladiator and the Monster* (Princeton, 1993), pp. 90-95; JAY, *Downcast Eyes*, p. 28, referring to “vision’s malevolent power” in the myths of Narcissus, Orpheus, and Medusa.

¹⁹ On the self-consuming eye, see J. ELSNER, “Naturalism and the erotics of the gaze: Of intimations of Narcissus”, in: *Sexuality in Ancient Art: Near East, Egypt, Greece, and Italy*, ed. N. BOYMEL KAMPEN (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 248-261; on self-bewitchment, see PLUTARCH, *Quaestiones convivales* 5. 7 (*Moralia* 680C-683B).

²⁰ NELSON, “Descartes’ cow”, p. 4.

²¹ *Serm.* 313A. 3, ed. MA, p. 67; tr. *Sermons III/9*, p. 92. In many of his sermons, as in this one, Augustine refers to the fact that the *passio* of the martyr was read on his or her feast day,

As he condemned the base delight and the self-consuming addiction that characterize watching secular performances, Augustine also referred briefly to martyr-narratives as spectacles in their own right; they differ from the other kind of spectacle in that the eye is directed inward, where the drama is played out in the mind's eye. As Augustine went on to say, the real difference between the two kinds of spectacles revolves around mimesis. Seeing is doing: no one, he argued, would be crazy enough to want to imitate actors that they see in the theatre, especially since the disrepute of the actors would contaminate the gazer.²² But those with "a sound and healthy mind would love to imitate the martyrs".²³

In emotionally charged rhetoric, Augustine immediately modeled how both the inner spectacle and the imitation take place:

Look, here am I, watching Cyprian; I'm crazy about Cyprian ... I'm watching him, I'm delighted by him, as far as I can I embrace him with the arms of my mind; I see him competing, I rejoice when he wins ... Say to me, "May you be like him!" See if I don't jump at the idea, see if I don't choose to be so, see if I don't long to be so ...²⁴

Augustine was quite adamant in his conviction that martyr-narratives were a form of spiritual theatre. In yet another sermon on martyrs, he exclaimed: "I love the martyrs, I go and watch the martyrs; when the Passions of the martyrs are read, I am a spectator, watching them".²⁵

The kind of spectacle that Augustine was talking about could not be seen literally: speaking at a *memoria* of the martyrs Protasius and Gervasius, he urged his listeners, "Shake up your faith, bring the eyes of your heart (*oculos cordis*) to bear, not your human eyes. You have other ones inside, after all, which God made for you. He opened the eyes of your heart, when he gave you

and preceded his sermon.

²² See also *Serm.* 301A. 7, ed. *MA*, p. 87; tr. *Sermons III/8*, pp. 295-296: "We have just now been spectators of the great contest of the seven brothers and their mother. What a contest, my brothers and sisters, if only our minds knew how to watch it! Compare with this holy spectacle the pleasures and delights of the theatres. There the eyes are defiled, here the heart is purified; here spectators are to be praised, if they become imitators; while there the spectator is base, and the imitator infamous".

²³ *Serm.* 313A. 3, ed. *MA*, pp. 67-68; tr. *Sermons III/9*, p. 92. On Augustine's view that Christians should imitate the martyrs, see R.B. ENO, SS, *Saint Augustine and the Saints* (Villanova, PA, 1989: *The Saint Augustine Lecture* 1985), pp. 59-64.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Serm.* 301A. 7, ed. *MA*, p. 87; tr. *Sermons III/8*, p. 296: "*Denique amo martyres, spectro martyres: quando leguntur passiones martyrum, specto*".

faith".²⁶ This was a spiritual theatre of the mind – as Augustine told one audience, each one's heart is a stage ("*theatro pectoris*") and "God is watching (*deus spectat*)" – and it was where he thought that the stories that infused the cult of relics with meaning were most truly performed, since that 'theatre' was where the ethical transformation provoked by the example of the saints took place.²⁷

Underlying Augustine's notion of mental theatre as the proper place for the Christian gaze lay the ancient rhetorical practice of *enargeia*, a type of composition that consisted of "vivid, sensuous word-painting" or "words that paint our thoughts" such that the mind's eye of the listener or reader could see what was being described.²⁸ The visionary aspect of this form of rhetorical exercise has been succinctly characterized as follows:

From well-established rhetorical practice Romans were accustomed to visualize the unseen, as if it were actually present. Visions (*visiones*), induced by powerful verbal representations, so stirred the emotions and stimulated the imagination that complex scenes could manifest themselves with convincing, vivid immediacy before the mind's eye.²⁹

²⁶ *Serm.* 286. 6, ed. *PL* 38, col. 1300; tr. *Sermons III/8*, p. 104. For other references to eyes of faith, inner eyes, and eyes of the heart, see *Serm.* 329. 2, ed. *PL* 38, col. 1455-1456; tr. *Sermons III/9*, p. 183: "So look at them very carefully, dearly beloved; you can't do it with your eyes, but think about them with mind and heart"; *Serm.* 274; 277. 1 (eyes of faith); *Serm.* 275. 1 (inner eyes); *Serm.* 277A. 1 (seeing in spirit); *Serm.* 280. 2 (clear sight of faith).

²⁷ *Serm.* 315. 10, ed. *PL* 38, col. 1431; tr. *Sermons III/9*, p. 134: "*Agnosce inimicam tuam: agnosce cum qua ignas in theatro pectoris tui. Angustum theatrum; sed Deus spectat*". Giselle de Nie has recently used Clifford Geertz's theory of ritual to explain the impact of the reading of saints' lives and miracle stories; her argument, which complements mine, is as follows: "Rituals, Geertz states, allow the worshipper to experience the precise coincidence of the everyday world with the belief world, and so they induce or even compel belief in the latter. One of the rituals Geertz mentions is the recitation of a myth. Such a myth would contain and present not only models of the reality postulated by religion, but also – and especially – models for what he calls 'producing' that reality in the perception of the worshipper. Saints' lives and miracles stories read in a liturgical context resemble such 'myths', and an important means of what Geertz called 'producing, intensifying and rendering ... inviolable by the discordant revelations of secular experience' the images and patterns – figures – of belief reality" (G. DE NIE, "Seeing and believing in the early Middle Ages: A preliminary investigation", in: *The Pictured Word*, ed. M. HEUSSER et al. (Amsterdam and Atlanta, 1998: *Word and Image Interactions* 2), p. 70, emphasis in original).

²⁸ CARRUTHERS, *Craft of Thought*, p. 130.

²⁹ R. BRILLIANT, " 'Let the trumpets roar!': The Roman triumph", in: *The Art of Ancient Spectacle*, ed. B. BERGMANN and C. KONDOLEON (Washington, DC, 1999: *Studies in the History of Art* 56), p. 224.

This was, in effect, what Augustine was both modelling and recommending to his listeners as they stood at tombs hearing the martyrs' passions read.

Equally important was Augustine's theory about the three kinds of vision. In his *Literal Commentary on Genesis*, Augustine explained them as follows: one kind of vision occurs through the eyes, by which the soul perceives corporeal objects by means of the body; the second kind of vision occurs in the imagination, where the soul sees likenesses of corporeal things that are absent; in the third kind, vision occurs "through an intuition of the mind", where "the soul understands those realities that are neither bodies nor the likenesses of bodies".³⁰ Further, the three kinds of vision – corporeal, pictomorphic, and conceptual – are mutually implicated and hierarchically ordered. Corporeal vision supplies the impressions that the imaginative part of the soul uses to create signs, those "images and likenesses of things", some of which "demand an intuition of the mind to be understood".³¹ In Augustine's ordering of these kinds of vision, "imaginal vision is more excellent than corporeal, and intellectual vision more excellent than imaginal".³²

³⁰ *De gen. ad lit.* 12. 6. 15; 12. 7. 16; 12. 24. 50 (ed. *PL* 34, cols. 458, 459, 474; tr. TAYLOR, *St. Augustine: The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, 2, pp. 185-186, 213). The most succinct of these statements is at 12. 6. 15: "*tria genera visionum occurrunt: unum per oculos, quibus ipsae litterae videntur; alterum per spiritum hominis quo proximus et absens cogitator; tertium per contuitum mentis, quo ipsa dilectio intellecta conspicitur*". Taylor translates "*spiritus*" as "spirit" but notes the special use of "*spiritus*" in this treatise to designate the imagination or the imaginative part of the soul (*St. Augustine: The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, 2, p. 301, n. 13). Thus where his translation uses "spirit", I have substituted "imagination", and for the adjectival form I have used "imaginal" rather than "imaginary" or "imaginative" in order to preserve the sense of mental image. See also the translation of E. HILL, OP, *The Works of Saint Augustine, Part I – Books, 13: On Genesis* (Hyde Park and New York, 2002), p. 470, n. 9, on *De gen. ad lit.* 12. 6. 15: "Here 'spirit' is being used in its least spiritual meaning, for what are also called the inner senses, memory and imagination".

³¹ *De gen. ad lit.* 12. 8. 19, ed. *PL*, 34, col. 460 (tr. TAYLOR, *St. Augustine: The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, 2, p. 188). On signs, see Augustine, *De doctrina christiana* 2. 1. 1, where a sign is defined as "a thing which causes us to think of something beyond the impression the thing itself makes upon the senses" (tr. D.W. ROBERTSON, *Saint Augustine: On Christian Doctrine* (Upper Saddle River, NJ, 1958), p. 34). Discussions of Augustine's theory of signs are legion; among the best are R.A. MARKUS, "St. Augustine on signs", in: *Augustine: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. R.A. MARKUS (Garden City, NY, 1972), pp. 61-91; D. DAWSON, "Sign theory, allegorical reading, and the motions of the soul in *De doctrina Christiana*", in: *De doctrina Christiana: A Classic of Western Culture*, ed. D.W. H. ARNOLD and P. BRIGHT (Notre Dame, 1995), pp. 123-141.

³² *De gen. ad lit.* 12. 24. 51, ed. *PL* 34, col. 475; tr. TAYLOR, *St. Augustine: The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, 2, p. 213.

The following extended passage, in which Augustine gave a differentiated sense of his notion of the imagination, is crucial for understanding the 'mental theatre' that he connected with the veneration of martyrs and their relics.

For it is not the body that perceives, but the soul by means of the body; and the soul uses the body as a sort of messenger in order to form within itself the object that is called to its attention from the outside world. Hence corporeal vision cannot take place unless there is a concomitant imaginal vision; but no distinction is made between the two until the bodily sensation has passed and the object perceived by means of the body is found in the imagination. On the other hand, there can be imaginal vision without corporeal vision, namely, when the likenesses of absent bodies appear in the imagination, and when many such images are fashioned by the free activity of the soul or are presented to it in spite of itself. Moreover, imaginal vision needs intellectual vision if a judgment is to be made upon its contents, but intellectual vision does not need imaginal, which is of a lower order.³³

The first feature of this passage to note is that two kinds of images can be present in the imagination; elsewhere, Augustine had specified these as the "true image (*phantasia*)", one that represents a corporeal object seen and stored in the memory, and the "fictitious image (*phantasma*)", one that is "fashioned by the power of thought".³⁴ In the commentary on Genesis, he gave as examples his mental image of Carthage, a place that he had seen, and of Alexandria, which he had only heard described.³⁵

This understanding of the fictitious image, one that does not correspond to an object actually seen but stems sheerly from the soul's activity, constitutes the psychological underpinning of the rhetorical exercise of *enargeia*, in which absent (and sometimes non-existent) objects were vividly conjured up in the hearer's mind.³⁶ And it also functions as a theoretical explanation for Augustine's promotion of the experience of martyrs' stories as spiritual theatre, since those stories in the inner eye were surely "imaginal visions without

³³ *De gen. ad lit.* 12. 24. 51, ed. PL 34, col. 475; tr. TAYLOR, *St. Augustine: The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, 2, p. 214.

³⁴ *De trinitate* 8. 6. 9, ed. W.J. MOUNTAIN and F. GLORIE, 2 vols. (Turnhout, 1968: CCSL 50-50A) [hereafter cited as *De trin.*], 1, p. 281. For discussion, see G. O'DALY, *Augustine's Philosophy of Mind* (Berkeley, 1987), p. 106: "Imagination can be merely *reproductive* of the images in the memory, but Augustine can also talk of the *creative* exercise of the imagination" (emphasis in original). As O'Daly points out, *phantasia* and *phantasma* correspond respectively to the reproductive and creative representations of the imagination.

³⁵ *De gen. ad lit.* 12. 6. 15, ed. PL 34, col. 458.

³⁶ See L. JAMES and R. WEBB, "To understand ultimate things and enter secret places": Ekphrasis and art in Byzantium", *Art History* 14 (1991), pp. 1-17.

corporeal vision" in which "likenesses of absent bodies" enacted their dramas.³⁷ These phantasmal performances brought the dead alive, making the invisible visible.

The other feature of the passage above that deserves attention is Augustine's statement that "imaginal vision needs intellectual vision if a judgment is to be made upon its contents". For it was not enough, in his view, to construct these visual tableaux as ends in themselves; judgment was called for. As Augustine explained elsewhere, when one reads or listens to what the apostle Paul wrote or to what Christ said or did, it is natural to fashion an image of that person in the mind. Furthermore, it makes no difference whether the image is true to reality or not; what matters is that "it is useful for some other purpose" – knowledge.³⁸ In his words,

But for our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, it is not the image which the mind forms for itself [to use for thinking] (which may perhaps be far different from what he actually looked like) that leads us to salvation, but, according to our mental representations, what [sorts of thoughts we have] about his humankind (*quod secundum speciem de homine cogitamus*).³⁹

What matters, in other words, is the process of conceptualization and religious judgment that accompanies such imaging.

The same need for conceptual knowledge and judgment can be seen in Augustine's position on constructing visual tableaux of martyrs. Their function as vehicles of moral reform and transformation has already been noted. But there is one more conceptual aspect of this mental picturing, the belief in the presence and power of saints in their relics, and it is in this context that Augustine's frequent preaching in the very presence of relics is significant. At a *memoria* dedicated to the martyrs Protasius and Gervasius, Augustine remarked, "[the martyrs] have asserted Christ's cause more effectively when dead than when they were alive. They assert it today, they preach him today".⁴⁰ Similarly, at the dedication of the shrine containing relics of St. Stephen in

³⁷ See O'DALY, *Augustine's Philosophy of Mind*, p. 109, on the connection between *phantasma* and intentional imagination (as opposed to flights of fancy); see also p. 110 for his discussion of Augustine, *Ep.* 7. 4, where Augustine lists historical figures (as well as fictional figures and mythical places) as members of the class of *phantasmata*. Being historical figures, martyrs fit well in this class of images.

³⁸ *De trin.* 8. 4. 7 (for the whole passage, see CCSL 50, pp. 275-276); see the discussion by CARRUTHERS, *Craft of Thought*, p. 121.

³⁹ *De trin.* 8. 4. 7, ed. CCSL 50, p. 276; tr. CARRUTHERS, *Craft of Thought*, p. 121.

⁴⁰ *Serm.* 286. 3, ed. PL 38, col. 1298; tr. *Sermons III/8*, p. 102.

Hippo Regius, he remarked, “His body lay hidden such a long time, it came to light when God willed, it shed its light on many lands, worked many miracles. Being dead, he brings the dead to life, because he isn’t in fact dead”.⁴¹ Defining relics as “lifeless flesh adorned with such a powerful mark of divinity (*caro exanimis tanto effectu divinitatis ornatur*)”, Augustine thought that they “bore witness to the truth that what dies does not perish”.⁴²

The kinds of judgment and conceptualization called for in the cult of relics thus entailed an understanding of the spiritual power of material objects like relics: they work miracles and they are active presences, testifying to Christian truth “today”. And those spiritually-charged objects also provide knowledge about such central Christian concepts as resurrection and the life of the soul with Christ.⁴³ In the spiritual theatre of the mind that Augustine created for martyrs, pictomorphic vision was crucial, but the form of storytelling knowledge that it produced was not spectacle for its own sake. Rather, it was a vehicle for the kinds of ethical judgment and conceptual understanding of central Christian beliefs that underlay the cult of martyrs and their relics.⁴⁴ Thus the imaginal seeing of phantasmal martyrs-in-action played an important role in Augustine’s understanding of Christian education, especially with regard to relics: what one really feels when one looks at the martyr with the eyes of faith is love “for his total and invisible beauty”.⁴⁵

Prudentius and Spiritual Landscapes

Referring to Prudentius’s narrative poetry about martyrs in his *Liber Peristephanon* as both a “spiritual art” and a “spiritual exercise”, Jacques Fontaine noted that this poetry was also full of “sensuous riches”. He emphasized “the power of the visual imagination” at work in the poems – an “alliance of the horrible and the graceful” that combines richly varied descriptions of place with gruesomely detailed descriptions of torture, suffering

⁴¹ *Serm.* 319. 6, ed. *PL* 38, col. 1441-1442; tr. *Sermons III/9*, p. 153.

⁴² *Serm.* 275. 3, ed. *PL* 38, col. 1255; tr. *Sermons III/8*, p. 28.

⁴³ See *Serm.* 328. 6, ed. *PL* 38, col. 1454; tr. *Sermons III/9*, p. 179, on the souls of martyrs being “already in bliss” with Christ.

⁴⁴ As ENO, *Saint Augustine*, p. 53, has pointed out, “Augustine’s view of the place of the saints in the general picture of things is a facet of his total picture of spiritual reality”. In Augustine’s *ordo caritatis*, martyrs occupy the top rung because they love God more than life, and they are exemplars of faith.

⁴⁵ *Serm.* 277. 1, ed. *PL* 38, col. 1257-1258; tr. *Sermons III/8*, p. 33.

and death.⁴⁶ Like Augustine, Prudentius used a technique of visualization in order to make the martyrs present in the reader's eye.⁴⁷ Also like Augustine, he associated martyrdom with spiritual combat and, as Michael Roberts has pointed out, with the "conquest of sin and temptation in the everyday experience of the individual Christian"; further, he sometimes "emphasized that the emotional force of veneration at a martyr's shrine depends on sympathetic identification between devotee and saint", as Augustine had as well.⁴⁸

Prudentius's distinctive contribution to the notion of martyrs' narratives as mental spectacles was his presentation of the poems as pilgrimages to physical landscapes that are also spiritual landscapes.⁴⁹ If the presence of the saints at the sites of their relics is palpable in Prudentius's text, it is due in part to the fact that, unlike Augustine, he made the martyrs' power of intercession a major theme of his narratives. Augustine also believed that the martyrs' souls, already with Christ in heaven, interceded for the faithful, especially by their prayers, and he mentioned intercession in his sermons on the martyrs.⁵⁰ But the motif of imitation of the saintly martyrs is much more prominent in the sermons, and in any case he was more cautious on the topic of intercession than Prudentius was, declaring that he couldn't say for sure exactly how it happened.⁵¹ Prudentius, however, had no such scruples or doubts; again and again, he referred to martyrs as advocates who not only hear prayers but immediately take them to

⁴⁶ J. FONTAINE, *Naissance de la poésie dans l'occident chrétien: Esquisse d'une histoire de la poésie latine chrétienne du III^e au VI^e siècle* (Paris, 1981), p. 188.

⁴⁷ For discussion of Prudentius's use of *ekphrasis*, see M. MALAMUD, *A Poetics of Transformation: Prudentius and Classical Mythology* (Ithaca, 1989), pp. 86, 106, 110-113; P. COX MILLER, "'The little blue flower is red': Relics and the poetizing of the body", *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 8 (2000), pp. 222-227.

⁴⁸ M. ROBERTS, *Poetry and the Cult of the Martyrs: The Liber Peristephanon of Prudentius* (Ann Arbor, 1993), pp. 98, 137; see also pp. 69-70, 189. See also J. ROSS, "Dynamic writing and martyrs' bodies in Prudentius' *Peristephanon*", *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 3 (1995), pp. 325-355, esp. p. 344 on the motif of visiting *martyria* and there internalizing the martyrs' passion and sacrifice.

⁴⁹ See ROBERTS, *Poetry and the Cult of the Martyrs*, p. 84, on the "dematerialization" of physical into spiritual landscape.

⁵⁰ See *Serm.* 284. 5 and 297. 3 on intercession; *Serm.* 313D. 1, 313E. 8, 316. 5 and 335H. 2 on martyrs' prayers helping devotees.

⁵¹ In addition to material on imitation already cited, see also *Serm.* 284. 6 and 297. 11. Augustine's caution on the topic of intercession is expressed most clearly in *De cura mortuis gerenda* 16. 19-20, where he asks such questions as how martyrs know about earthly affairs and how they hear petitioners' prayers. See ENO, *Saint Augustine*, pp. 68-70, for discussion.

the ear of Christ.⁵² The physical place of the tomb is the site of spiritual conversations.

Palpable presence is also conveyed by Prudentius's gritty, physical descriptions of the martyrs' combat and triumph, which are much longer than any of Augustine's evocations of martyrs' stories. These descriptions give his text a gripping realism: his poems situate the reader or hearer in a place "where blood is spilled, teeth and bones are shattered, and bodily parts are cut off with abandon".⁵³ This is of course *figural* realism, since Prudentius interwove myth with legends of the martyrs, and in any case much of his material cannot be verified historically; as one interpreter has wryly noted, "Prudence n'est pas un historien, c'est un poète".⁵⁴ As his poetic evocations of martyrs' stories unfold, the reader is taken on a journey that seems not only grippingly real, but often surreal, and it is in those moments that the physical landscape becomes a spiritual vision.

Prudentius needed surreal imagery in order to make 'visible' the nexus of physical with spiritual reality because intercession is a theological idea; it cannot be 'seen', but it can be invoked by using imagery that encourages identification with the figure through whom that power is thought to flow.⁵⁵ In one sense, the devotee as presented by Prudentius was more passive than Augustine's, since Augustine encouraged active cultivation of virtue and ethical transformation when he recommended imitation of the martyrs, whereas Prudentius emphasized the stance of the devotee as petitioner, as one in need of forgiveness. From that perspective, for Prudentius seeing was not doing but rather being acted upon. In another sense, however, Prudentius's devotee (including especially the poet himself) was *more* active than Augustine's

⁵² See, e.g. *Peristephanon* 2. 579-581, 4. 189-191 and 10. 1134-1140, in: *Prudence*, 4: *Le livre des couronnes (Peristephanon liber)*, ed. and tr. M. LAVARENNE (Paris, 1963) [hereafter cited as *Pe*]; on prayers taken immediately to heaven, see *Pe* 1. 16-20.

⁵³ MALAMUD, *Poetics of Transformation*, 1. On Prudentius's expectation that his poems would be read aloud, see ROSS, "Dynamic Writing", p. 327 and n. 9.

⁵⁴ LAVARENNE, *Prudence*, p. 11. One of the most blatant uses of myth to enhance a saint's legend is in *Pe* 11, where the death of the martyr Hippolytus is conflated with the death of the mythical figure of the same name. See MALAMUD, *Poetics of Transformation*, pp. 79-113, for discussion.

⁵⁵ For Prudentius's view of relics as both corporeal and spiritual, see, e.g. *Pe* 5. 517-520, where the relics of Saint Vincent are described as "set in the shrine and buried beneath the altar, [the bones] below are drenched and drink in the breath of heavenly bounty" (tr. ROBERTS, *Poetry and the Cult of the Martyrs*, p. 195); see also *Pe* 4. 189-190, in which the martyr Encratis is said to "ask for mercy for our sins from her place at the foot of the eternal altar", where, as Lavarenne notes, Prudentius refers to the practice of placing relics placed beneath altars but is also alluding to the saint's heavenly home (LAVARENNE, *Prudence*, p. 221, n. 3).

venerator, since Prudentius emphasized the coincidence of physical with spiritual sight and often envisioned the devotee as actively engaged in ritual performance at the site of the martyrs' relics. Whereas Augustine emphasized the *inner* eye at the expense of corporeal vision, Prudentius, like Chrysostom, thought that the visual surround in a martyrrium was an important stimulus for the process of visionary storytelling.

In order to animate the dead, Prudentius wrote mini-dramas of cruelty and pain that act directly on the readers' physical and emotional sensibilities, inducing an empathic response that opens the devotee to the martyr's passion and spiritual power. One of the most striking examples is his depiction of the martyr Cassian. As a character in his own text, Prudentius positions himself in the ritual act of prostration at Cassian's tomb. Weeping and reflecting on his sins, he looks up and sees a painting of Cassian's martyrdom, a particularly gruesome one in which the students of Cassian, a teacher, prick him all over with their pointed *styli* once he has been exposed as a Christian, and he bleeds to death. In this word-picture, Prudentius lingers, as was his wont, on the details of torture, making them seem so real that the reader cannot help but imagine it in a visceral way:

Some hurl their writing tablets at him, and they shatter against his face, and flying wooden splinters pierce his forehead. Loudly the wax-covered boxwood breaks on his cheeks all bloodied, and from the blow the page is wet with red ink.⁵⁶

Emotion is not lacking, either, as Prudentius pictures himself as not only weeping but also embracing and kissing the tomb so that it became warm from his physical contact with it.⁵⁷

The surreal moment of conjunction between physical and spiritual seeing occurs in the final line of this passage, in which the students' assault produces a "page wet with red ink".⁵⁸ Is Prudentius describing Cassian's body as a page, or is the blood-soaked page his own text? Given Prudentius's tendency to equate wounds with words, as well as his intensification of "the artistic convention of equating a martyr with a written text",⁵⁹ the answer to the

⁵⁶ *Pe* 9. 47-50 (tr. adapted from *The Poems of Prudentius*, tr. M.C. EAGAN, CCVI (Washington, DC, 1962: *The Fathers of the Church* 43), p. 185).

⁵⁷ *Pe* 9. 99-100.

⁵⁸ *Pe* 9. 50: "*rubetque ab ictu curta et umens pagina*".

⁵⁹ ROSS, "Dynamic writing", p. 330; see further pp. 331-334 on the equation of words and wounds in the *Peristephanon*. In *Pe* 3. 136, e.g., Eulalia exclaims about her wounds, "You write on me here, Lord" ("*Scriberis ecce mihi, Domine*"), and in *Pe* 10. 1119, Romanus is described as "a page inscribed by Christ" ("*inscripta Christo pagina*").

question would seem to be: both. As poet, Prudentius wrote with the martyr's blood, and he also identified with the martyr's wounds, since he refers to his own "mental wounds (*mea vulnera*)" and "pinpricks of sufferings (*dolorum acumina*)", which had brought him to Cassian's tomb in the first place.⁶⁰ Furthermore, identification brings intercession. As Jill Ross has argued, "It is not enough that the martyrs' bodies bear redemptive wounds, since what is required is a participation in their suffering made possible by the transformation of their bodies into texts. To share actively in their martyrdom one must read the marks on their bodies before salvation can be conferred".⁶¹ And "salvation" does occur in this text: having surveyed (*percenseo*) all of his hidden anxieties – a mental narrative drama analogous to the one he wrote about Cassian – Prudentius was heard, and his pilgrimage to Rome was a success.⁶²

Prudentius's version of Chrysostom's experience of a vision of the dead entering the soul of the venerator as a process of identifying with the martyr is perhaps most pointed in his account of the martyr Romanus. When brought to trial because of his profession of the Christian faith, Romanus delivered a long anti-pagan diatribe. Irked by this, the judge ordered that Romanus's tongue be cut out; surreally, he continued to speak ("a tongue has never failed the man who speaks of Christ") until he was finally killed.⁶³ Exploiting the double meaning of *lingua* as both tongue and language, Prudentius makes it clear that the martyr's "tongue" is also *his* tongue. He opens the poem on Romanus by petitioning the martyr to make his "silent tongue vibrate" within his own mouth; calling himself "mute", Prudentius then says, "I stammer out my halting words with feeble tongue ... but if you [Romanus] will sprinkle heavenly dew on my heart, my grating voice will then breathe sweet harmonies".⁶⁴ A few verses later, Prudentius wrote, "I myself am mute, but Christ, with powerful eloquence, will be my tongue" and will enable him to speak clearly.⁶⁵ Not only are poet and martyr linked through the tongue, but the poet's language – his text – is divinely inspired. These surreal linkages, which are physical and spiritual at once, are surely an "alliance of the horrible and the graceful", but they also demonstrate how Prudentius's visualizing of the invisible depends upon

⁶⁰ *Pe* 9. 7-8. See ROBERTS, *Poetry and the Cult of the Martyrs*, p. 137, who notes that Cassian's wounds are also referred to as *acumina* in *Pe* 9. 51; thus "the language for bodily and spiritual suffering coincides exactly".

⁶¹ ROSS, "Dynamic writing", p. 334.

⁶² *Pe* 9. 101-105.

⁶³ *Pe* 10. 928 (*The Poems of Prudentius*, tr. EAGAN, p. 230).

⁶⁴ *Pe* 10. 2-15 (tr. adapted from *The Poems of Prudentius*, tr. EAGAN, pp. 190-191).

⁶⁵ *Pe* 10. 21-22.

identification with the martyr, such that temporal distinctions between the martyr's past and the venerator's present are annulled.⁶⁶

This simultaneity of saintly and human experience also characterizes the way in which Prudentius as author converts a physical into a spiritual landscape. As Malamud has observed, Prudentius' poems "tend to progress by a series of dislocations, jumps that move the characters and the reader from one order of experience to another".⁶⁷ Just as identification with the martyr by a living person collapses temporal distinctions, so also the placement of martyrs both on earth as relics and in heaven as souls collapses spatial distinctions.⁶⁸ Prudentius, however, took the convention of the martyrs' simultaneous presence in two spatial realms a step further when he artfully depicted the transformation of physical into spiritual landscape while the martyrs are still alive, thus moving the reader's gaze from the drama of torment to its underlying theological significance, that is, from one order of experience (empathic response to pain) to another (conceptual knowledge of salvation).

In the story of the martyr Eulalia of Merida, for example Prudentius depicted her nocturnal escape from her protective mother as she ran for miles to the magistrate's court in order to testify for the faith.⁶⁹ As the reader follows her "circuitous course over thorn bushes that lacerate her feet", the scene changes eerily as Prudentius notes the choir of angels that accompany her and the guide that lights her path, a reference that points forward to the path that her soul will take after her death, "winging its way to celestial heights".⁷⁰ This overlay of a spiritual journey on a physical one becomes even eerier as Prudentius abruptly compares the light that guides Eulalia with the pillar of light that guided the Israelites out of Egypt.⁷¹ As the Israelites fled from Egypt to freedom in the promised land, so Eulalia's journey through Merida/Egypt will gain her freedom, too, since, as Roberts remarks, Prudentius describes her "both as fleeing from Egypt and on her way to heaven".⁷² The physical landscape of Merida has become a spiritual landscape of religious liberation and salvation.

⁶⁶ ROBERTS, *Poetry and the Cult of the Martyrs*, p. 13; see also P. BROWN, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago, 1981), p. 81.

⁶⁷ MALAMUD, *A Poetics of Transformation*, p. 43.

⁶⁸ On the collapsing of spatial distinctions at martyr's tombs, see MILLER, "The little blue flower is red", pp. 225, 233; BROWN, *Cult of the Saints*, pp. 3-5.

⁶⁹ *Pe* 3. 31-65.

⁷⁰ *Pe* 3. 46-50, 170 (tr. adapted from *The Poems of Prudentius*, tr. EAGAN, pp. 130, 135).

⁷¹ *Pe* 3. 51-55.

⁷² ROBERTS, *Poetry and the Cult of the Martyrs*, p. 103; quotation from *Pe* 3. 60. On Prudentius's use of biblical *exempla*, see ROBERTS, *Poetry and the Cult of the Martyrs*, pp. 102-108.

In a manner analogous to Augustine's use of mental theatre to provoke conceptual knowledge about such Christian doctrines as resurrection, Prudentius elided physical with spiritual landscapes to teach his readers about the theology underlying martyrs' journeys.

By animating the martyrs in his mini-dramas, Prudentius not only made them and their spiritual power visible, he also gave another kind of 'invisibility', the conceptual grasp of Christian truths, tangible expression. A final example from the *Peristephanon* will show how he accomplished these forms of animation by converting physical into spiritual location. In Prudentius's story of Vincent, the martyr refuses to worship pagan gods and lectures his pagan foe Datian about the stupidity of his beliefs; when torture proves to no avail, Datian throws Vincent into prison, described as a pit "blacker than darkness itself", which immediately becomes an image of hell ("this terrible prison, it is said, had an underworld (*inferos*) of its own").⁷³ As Roberts notes, "physical reality is here dematerialized into spiritual 'landscape' " as Vincent's story becomes one with Christ's descent into hell.⁷⁴ But that downward journey is not the end of this overlay of the physical by the spiritual. Next, the saint's feet are put in stocks, and his tormentor also orders that the floor of the prison be strewn with sharp, jagged pieces of broken pots. As Vincent lies there in torment, the dark cell begins to glow and, as the stocks that bind his legs spring open, he realizes that "Christ, the giver of light", is present.⁷⁵ Immediately Vincent sees that the pieces of broken pots have been covered with "tender flowers" that are redolent of nectar, and angels surround him, inviting him to join their company.⁷⁶ Hell has become Paradise; Prudentius here draws on the conventional depiction of Paradise as a flowery *locus amoenus* in order to make visible the spiritual landscape that has merged with Vincent's physical prison.⁷⁷ In the surreal moment when the jagged potsherds – instruments of torture – begin to bloom with delicate flowers, the full significance of the spiritual landscape is realized: like Christ, Vincent will ascend to heaven. What the reader finally 'sees', then, is not only the martyr's literal drama but also a paradigm of Christian redemption.

Unlike Augustine, Prudentius did not draw on images of spectacle and the theatre in order to visualize the invisible. Instead, he employed a rhetoric that

⁷³ *Pe* 5. 241-242, 248 (tr. ROBERTS, *Poetry and the Cult of the Martyrs*, p. 84).

⁷⁴ ROBERTS, *Poetry and the Cult of the Martyrs*, p. 84.

⁷⁵ *Pe* 5. 276.

⁷⁶ *Pe* 5. 277-288.

⁷⁷ See MILLER, " 'The little blue flower is red' ", p. 230, on Paradise as a flowery garden.

depended upon images of the human body in pain.⁷⁸ As Malamud has pointed out, however, those images of “dissolution, amputation, and dismemberment are offset by more positive images of liberation and freedom.”⁷⁹ A rhetoric of gore yields to a rhetoric of liberation.⁸⁰ By giving the martyrs’ stories detailed narrative life, and by undercutting the surface realism of the narratives with surreal images of spiritual intrusion into human life, Prudentius gave visual immediacy not only to a dead person’s life but also to the religious ideas that gave that life meaning.

Two ideas are particularly prominent in his poems: first, that martyrs’ lives and deaths embody the Christian belief in resurrection, and second, that because of their triumph, martyrs’ remains are conduits of spiritual power, especially intercession for the forgiveness of human sinfulness. Resurrection and intercession are ideas, and one cannot ‘see’ ideas, but powerful rhetoric like Prudentius’s can evoke them. Finally, it is significant that Prudentius chose the framing device of pilgrimage to relic-shrines for his poems. As Georgia Frank has pointed out, “the journey remains an enduring metaphor for the spiritual life.”⁸¹ Prudentius’s own physical pilgrimage was also a spiritual journey; this is clear from the endings of so many of his poems, in which he cries out for forgiveness, grace, and redemption. His own journey, that is, replicates the conflating of physical with spiritual planes of reality that marks the stories of the martyrs that he wrote about. For the “armchair pilgrims” who heard or read his narratives, the poems provided a double vision of the spiritual life.⁸²

⁷⁸ As Averil Cameron has observed, the body is “the most characteristic of Christian metaphors”; as she goes on to argue, “[t]he theme of the Incarnation of Christ imposed the language of the body, and with it bodily symbolism, on Christian writing” (A. CAMERON, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire: The Development of Christian Discourse* (Berkeley, 1991: *Sather Classical Lectures* 55), p. 68). In the case of Prudentius, it would seem that the Crucifixion was equally important as a source of bodily imagery.

⁷⁹ ROBERTS, *A Poetics of Transformation*, p. 175.

⁸⁰ As Roberts notes, every poem in the *Peristephanon* “contains a formula of heavenly ascent” (ROBERTS, *Poetry and the Cult of the Martyrs*, p. 70).

⁸¹ G. FRANK, *The Memory of the Eyes: Pilgrims to Living Saints in Christian Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, 2000: *The Transformation of the Classical Heritage* 30), p. 68.

⁸² The phrase in quotations is from FRANK, *Memory of the Eyes*, pp. 4, 69, where it refers to readers of monastic travel literature like the *Historia monachorum*. I think it applies equally well to a text like the *Peristephanon*.

Victricius and Metaphors of Light

Like Augustine and Prudentius, Victricius was an enthusiast of the cult of relics. When, late in the fourth century, he received relics sent by Ambrose of Milan as a gift for his church in Rouen, he preached a sermon, *De laude sanctorum*, which is the only sustained theoretical explanation of relics extant from late antiquity.⁸³ With Victricius, one does not have to infer the means by which a material object like a relic – a dead body-part – can be a conduit of spiritual power; his theological reasoning is overt.

Basically, the concern that underlay Victricius's view of relics was one that was at the core of late ancient Christian asceticism: how can the human body be a locus of sanctity? More particularly, Victricius was interested in articulating the very nature of the sanctity of the body-parts that were relics by showing how the spirit of the martyrs and even divinity itself were present in them.⁸⁴ The bulk of Victricius's treatise is thus devoted to two issues: the fullness of divine power in relics, and the wholeness of those fragments, that is, the idea that the saint's power is completely present in every corporeal bit. He argued that,

if God, the author of all things, put together this spiritual vessel and members out of nothing, why could he not convert an animate body (*animatum corpus*), formed (so to speak) by the leaven of blood, into the substance of his light (*ad sui luminis transferre substantiam*)?⁸⁵

Victricius went much further than did either Augustine or Prudentius in developing a "radically incarnational" understanding of relics that viewed them not simply as conduits of divine power, but as virtually identical with that power.⁸⁶

To the issue of the fullness of divine power in relics, Victricius based his reasoning on the premise that all human beings share the same corporeal nature;

⁸³ The date of the sermon is *ca.* CE 397; for discussion of Victricius's career, especially his contacts with Ambrose and also with Paulinus of Nola, see Gillian Clark's introduction to her translation of the sermon, G. CLARK, "Victricius of Rouen: *Praising the Saints*", *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 7 (1999), pp. 365-399, esp. pp. 365-366, 372-375. Quotations from *De laude sanctorum* [hereafter *De laude*] are from Clark's translation; for the text, see the edition by J. MULDER and R. DEMEULENAERE in: CCL 64 (Turnhout, 1985), pp. 53-93.

⁸⁴ See D.G. HUNTER, "Vigilantius of Calagurris and Victricius of Rouen: Ascetics, relics, and clerics in late Roman Gaul", *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 7 (1999), pp. 401-430, esp. p. 425.

⁸⁵ *De laude* 9. 14-16, ed. CCL 64, p. 83; tr. CLARK, "Victricius of Rouen", p. 389.

⁸⁶ On Victricius's radically incarnational theology, see HUNTER, "Vigilantius of Calagurris", p. 428.

further, Christians, by virtue of the sacrament of baptism, are also one 'body' spiritually: "for those who live in Christ and the church there is one substance of flesh and blood and spirit, by the gift of adoption". Finally, martyrs, who have imitated Christ's passion and so have a closer bond, "are entirely with the Saviour in his entirety. For those who have nothing that differs in their profession [of faith] have everything in common in the truth of the godhead".⁸⁷ This union between martyrs and the godhead is physical as well as spiritual. Victricius argued, using human blood as the essence of corporeality, that "blood, after martyrdom, is on fire with the reward of divinity".⁸⁸ As Gillian Clark has succinctly remarked, "God, being complete and perfect, cannot somehow have saints added on: so after martyrdom the saints (flesh, blood, and spirit) are wholly united with divinity".⁸⁹

The solution to the second issue – the complete presence of martyrs in the fragments of their "dead" bodies – follows logically from this view of the ontological union between martyrs and God (even if that union is, as Victricius says, "by adoption, not by nature").⁹⁰ If the martyrs are united with God, and God cannot be divided, therefore neither can the martyrs: the whole is completely present in the part. As Victricius expressed it, "the truth of the whole corporeal passion is present in fragments of the righteous".⁹¹ Not only the bodies of the martyrs, but also their spirits, have "taken on the fiery heat of the word"; thus "there is nothing in relics which is not complete".⁹² With abstract arguments like these, Victricius did not really make the invisible visible so much as explain how the spirit could in principle be material; relics, the "first fruits of the resurrection", had breached the boundary between heaven and earth in a way that no mental spectacle ever could.⁹³

Yet even Victricius, for all his heady theological conviction that divine spirit was materialized before his very eyes, felt the need to retrain the vision of

⁸⁷ *De laude* 7. 1, 15, 35, ed. CCL 64, pp. 76-78; tr. CLARK, "Victricius of Rouen", pp. 385-386.

⁸⁸ *De laude* 8. 10-11, ed. CCL 64, p. 81; tr. CLARK, p. 387.

⁸⁹ CLARK, "Victricius of Rouen", p. 387, n. 118. See HUNTER, "Vigilantius of Calagurris", p. 428: "Victricius apparently means that, since blood is present in the fragments of the relics, then, by virtue of the consubstantiality of matter, the entirety of the saint is present; and if the saint, who is united to the very substance of God is present, then so is the very power of God".

⁹⁰ *De laude* 8. 21-22, ed. CCL 64, p. 82; tr. CLARK, "Victricius of Rouen", p. 388.

⁹¹ On God being "diffused" (*diffunditur*) everywhere but not divided, see *De laude* 8. 15; for the quotation, *De laude* 9. 29-30, ed. CCL 64, pp. 81, 83; tr. CLARK, "Victricius of Rouen", pp. 388, 390.

⁹² *De laude* 9. 30-34, ed. CCL 64, pp. 83-84; tr. CLARK, "Victricius of Rouen", p. 390.

⁹³ *De laude* 12. 115 ("*primae resurrectionis exordia*"), ed. CCL 64, p. 92; tr. CLARK, "Victricius of Rouen", p. 399.

his audience. At one point in his sermon, he contrasts the “confusion of the eyes” with the clearer “vision of reason”:

If we said that relics were divided from the spirit, we would be right to look for all the connection and solidity of body parts. But when we realize that the substance is united, it follows that we are searching for the whole in the whole This confusion is of the eyes: the vision of reason is clearer. We see small relics and a little blood. But truth perceives that these tiny things are brighter than the sun, for the Lord says in the gospel, “My saints shall shine like the sun in the kingdom of the Father (Mt 13, 43)”.⁹⁴

In this passage, Victricius seems to be suggesting that, as material objects, relics are more ambiguously corporeal than he has argued elsewhere. The literal gaze wants to see the connection and solidity; perhaps it even wants to see a whole body, not realizing the truth of the argument about the whole inhering in the part (which is also a whole!).⁹⁵ The point is that relics are precisely *spiritual* objects, and as such, to look at or touch them requires, so Victricius will argue, a metaphorical sensibility.⁹⁶

In the passage just quoted, Victricius has risked dissolving the materiality of relics in the sunny brilliance of their spiritual power. These “animate substances” are not, after all, so easy to ‘see’. Just prior to his comment about the “confusion of the eyes”, Victricius had used a semiotic argument to help his audience apprehend the meaning of relics properly:

Why, then, do we call them “relics”? Because words are images and signs of things. Before our eyes are blood and clay. We impress on them the name of “relics” because we cannot do otherwise, with (so to speak) the seal of living language. But now, by uttering the whole in the part, we open the eyes of the heart, not the barriers of our bodily sight.⁹⁷

⁹⁴ *De laude* 10. 32-40, ed. CCL 64, p. 86; tr. CLARK, “Victricius of Rouen”, p. 393.

⁹⁵ See CLARK, “Victricius of Rouen”, p. 391, n. 141: “Victricius will argue, in effect, that ‘leftover’ prompts the question ‘leftover what?’ Just as (for instance) ‘it’s a finger’ is not a helpful definition unless the finger is related to the hand, and subsequently the human body, of which it is a part, so ‘it’s a relic’ requires an account of the body of the saint”. Hence Victricius’s concern to establish the unity of substance between martyrs and God, which moves the status of relics to another level of coherence that has nothing to do with a literally ‘whole’ body.

⁹⁶ See *De laude* 11. 26-29, ed. CCL 64, p. 87; tr. CLARK, “Victricius of Rouen”, p. 394: “I point with my hand to what is sought; I touch fragments; I affirm that in these relics is perfect grace and perfect virtue”. Here Victricius effects a shift in how meaning is discerned, moving from physical sense to faith.

⁹⁷ *De laude* 10. 1-5, ed. CCL 64, p. 84; tr. CLARK, “Victricius of Rouen”, p. 391.

Victricius has contrasted two kinds of eyes, much as Augustine had, and, even though he saw 'more' with the eyes of faith than did Augustine, he agreed that 'seeing' relics demanded an imaginative approach.⁹⁸ His distinctive version of mental spectacle, in contrast with those of Chrysostom and Augustine, did not use the rhetoric of contemporary theatre; rather, his images for relics depended upon a widespread late ancient rhetorical convention that evoked the holy by using metaphors of light, colour, and jewels.⁹⁹

Like others who wrote to create a meaningful ambience in which relics could signify holiness, Victricius relied in part upon an aesthetics of light and brilliance in order to induce a 'seeing' of relics that would not confuse the eyes.¹⁰⁰ In order to make spiritual sense of the sight of body-fragments – that is to say, in order to evoke the whole in the part – he needed a metaphor that was powerful enough to rival an actual body. He found it in the metaphor of light, which appears in a variety of guises in his sermon: as the radiance of fire, the brightness of the sun, and the sparkle of jewels. Here the Christian taste for brilliance in the arts assumed literary form, and Victricius utilized this rhetorical dazzle in order to picture what his theological abstractions could not picture, a fusion of matter and spirit, an animate body converted into the substance of God's light.¹⁰¹

Perhaps because he thought of the saints and their relics as "renowned celestial powers", Victricius used the metaphor of the sun and heavenly light to depict their spiritual force.¹⁰² Remarking twice that martyrs and relics are "brighter than the sun", he found a forceful metaphor to capture their immaterial materiality (for to look at the sun is blinding, not to mention something even brighter than the sun) and also to depict their presence in the Christian community: "heavenly brilliance is not cheated out of any place on earth", and "before the day of judgment the radiance of the righteous pours into

⁹⁸ On the late ancient tendency to see more than was literally there, particularly in the arts, see J. ONIANS, "Abstraction and imagination in late Antiquity", *Art History* 3 (1980), pp. 1-24, esp. p. 20: "The vitality of Christianity depended partly on its insistence that people should disregard the evidence of their eyes", developing a rich inner sight instead.

⁹⁹ On this convention, see M. ROBERTS, *The Jeweled Style: Poetry and Poetics in Late Antiquity* (Ithaca, 1989); D. JANES, *God and Gold in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, 1998); L. JAMES, *Light and Colour in Byzantine Art* (Oxford, 1996); EAD., "Colour and meaning in Byzantium", *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 11 (2003), pp. 223-233.

¹⁰⁰ For a full discussion of relics and aesthetics, see MILLER, "The little blue flower is red"; EAD., "'Differential networks': Relics and other fragments in late Antiquity", *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 6 (1998), pp. 113-138.

¹⁰¹ On the early Christian taste for brilliance, see JANES, *God and Gold*, pp. 139-152.

¹⁰² *De laude* 1. 12-13, ed. CCSL 64, p. 69; tr. CLARK, "Victricius of Rouen", p. 376.

all basilicas, all churches, the hearts of the faithful ...".¹⁰³ In the late ancient Christian imagination, no colour carried greater ethical significance than gold, the colour of the sun. Gold was the most splendid form of heavenly light materialized, and when ancient viewers looked at gold, they saw the radiance of divine goodness.¹⁰⁴ In Victricius's literary appropriation of sunlight as a metaphor for relics, there is a distinctive ethics, and it is akin to that of Prudentius's sense of identity with martyrs and with Chrysostom's notion of being invaded by visions of the dead. For Victricius, the heart of the venerator is flooded by the radiance of the righteous.

The ethical significance of light is elsewhere overt in the sermon. Having connected the martyrs and their relics with light again and again, Victricius wrote, "sins are darkness, innocent is light".¹⁰⁵ Further, referring to the blazing quality of the sun, he imagined relics as having "fiery rays of light in themselves",¹⁰⁶ and by that light the martyrs teach ascetic virtues to their venerators:

See, the righteous show us the path of truth, as if they carried before us the light of their relics. They teach reverence, faith, wisdom, righteousness, courage, concord, self-control, chastity, while in our besieged bodies they punish that which is opposed to these and remove the stains of vice.¹⁰⁷

Because their very blood is "mixed with supernal fire" and because they have "taken on the fiery heat of the Word", relics are divine pedagogues.¹⁰⁸ Victricius's fiery metaphors gave pictorial force to the moral understanding of brightness that he developed in passages such as this.

Finally, there are the metaphors of jewels, which convey straightforwardly the specifically ascetic form of conduct with which the veneration of relics was associated in Victricius's view. Although Augustine certainly encouraged his audiences to imitate the virtues of the martyrs, he did not make as close a connection as Victricius did with veneration of relics and a stringent form of

¹⁰³ *De laude* 10. 38-39; 12. 41-42 (brighter than the sun; ed. CCSL 64, pp. 86, 90; tr. CLARK, "Victricius of Rouen", pp. 393, 397); 1. 29-30 (heavenly brilliance; ed. CCSL 64, p. 70; tr. CLARK, "Victricius of Rouen", p. 377); 9. 1-3 (radiance; ed. CCSL 64, p. 82; tr. CLARK, "Victricius of Rouen", p. 389).

¹⁰⁴ JANES, *God and Gold*, pp. 74-79, 89-91, 144-152.

¹⁰⁵ *De laude* 8. 37-38, ed. CCSL 64, p. 82; tr. CLARK, "Victricius of Rouen", p. 388.

¹⁰⁶ *De laude* 8. 31, ed. CCSL 64, p. 82; tr. CLARK, "Victricius of Rouen", p. 388.

¹⁰⁷ *De laude* 8. 25-29, ed. CCSL 64, p. 82; tr. CLARK, "Victricius of Rouen", p. 388.

¹⁰⁸ *De laude* 9. 20-22, 33-34, ed. CCSL 64, pp. 83, 84; tr. CLARK, "Victricius of Rouen", p. 390.

ascetic practice. As David Hunter has pointed out, in late fourth-century Gaul “it was the advocates of ascetic renunciation who seem to have been most zealous in propagating the cult of the apostles and martyrs”, and with it the cult of their relics.¹⁰⁹ Victricius first mentioned jewels precisely in the context of the participation of ascetic Christians in the veneration of relics. Early on in his treatise, he used imagery drawn from the imperial *adventus* to picture the entry into Rouen of the relics sent by Ambrose.¹¹⁰ He described the crowd almost completely in terms of various kinds of renunciation: “throngs of monks refined by fasting”, a “chorus of devout and untouched virgins”, “multitudes of celibates and widows”, and married women who have “condemned intercourse”.¹¹¹

After introducing this chaste group and noting that, unlike the crowd at an imperial *adventus*, none of them wears clothing marked with purple or jewelry, he then concentrates on envisioning the procession of the women:

These women advance resplendent, radiant with the intoxication of chastity. They advance decked with divine gifts as ornaments. Their breasts are filled with the riches of psalms. There is no night of vigils in which this jewel does not gleam.¹¹²

In this passage, literal jewels have become metaphors for the spiritual gifts that are the prized possession of ascetics. Furthermore, these women have even taken on a bit of the light of relics, “radiant” as they are in their embrace of chastity. Victricius’s description of their piety as a gleaming jewel is a rhetorical flourish, to be sure, but it gives visual immediacy to the ethical import of both asceticism and the veneration of relics.

There is more to the metaphor of jewels than evoking piety, however. Early on in the sermon, Victricius had called the martyrs “dwellers in our hearts (*habitatores pectoris nostri*)”.¹¹³ Towards the end, he returned to the close connection between relic-venerators and martyrs, this time drawing on imperial *adventus*-imagery in order to describe the martyrs rather than participants in their cult:

¹⁰⁹ HUNTER, “Vigilantius of Calagurris”, pp. 429-430.

¹¹⁰ On the staging of the entry of relics into a city as an *adventus*, see K. HOLM and G. VIKAN, “The Trier ivory, *adventus* ceremonial, and the relics of St. Stephen”, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 33 (1979), pp. 113-133.

¹¹¹ *De laude* 3. 11-23, ed. CCL 64, p. 73; tr. CLARK, “Victricius of Rouen”, p. 379.

¹¹² *De laude* 3. 33-36, ed. CCL 64, p. 74; tr. CLARK, “Victricius of Rouen”, p. 380.

¹¹³ *De laude* 1. 18, ed. CCL 64, p. 70; tr. CLARK, “Victricius of Rouen”, p. 377.

In place of the royal cloak, here is the garment of eternal light. The togas of the saints have absorbed this purple. Here are diadems adorned with the varied lights of the jewels of wisdom, intellect, knowledge, truth, good counsel, courage, endurance, self-control, justice, good sense, patience, chastity. These virtues are expressed and inscribed each in its own stone. Here the Saviour-craftsman has adorned the crowns of the martyrs with spiritual jewels. Let us set the sails of our souls towards these gems.¹¹⁴

Here Victricius repeats the connection between martyrs and the virtues made earlier in the sermon. This time, however, the virtues are pictured as “spiritual jewels” in the martyrs’ crowns. This second use of the metaphor of the jewel connects martyrs directly with the “radiant” ascetic women, ornamented with spiritual blessing, whose piety is a jewel that gleams. Through this metaphorical connection, it would seem that ascetics, too, are martyrs. In a manner analogous to Prudentius’s version of identifying with martyrs by assimilating their attributes to his endeavours as poet (the “page wet with blood” as Cassian’s body/text and Romanus’s tongue/language), Victricius has at least implied a kind of identity by his use of the metaphor of the spiritual jewel.

Of course the identity is not complete; martyrs may dwell in our hearts, but they are also those gems *toward* which our souls travel. And living ascetic “martyrs” are not relics, however radiant with virtue they may be. The light that flashes from the relics is blinding and induces another kind of seeing that is of the heart, not the literal eyes. By consistently interpreting relics with metaphors of light-in-action – gleaming, shining brilliantly, sending out fiery rays – Victricius endowed them with a scintillating energy that his abstract theology about their divinity could point to but not embody. Victricius’s theological construction of relics as ambiguously corporeal – as both immaterially material and materially immaterial – did indeed make them difficult to visualize. He needed metaphor, and he developed an aesthetics of relics that was no less a spectacle, an appeal to the inner eye, than those of his relic-minded companions Augustine and Prudentius.

Conclusion: Visual Desperation?

The literature that arose in the late fourth and early fifth centuries in the context of the cult of the martyrs and their relics was a literature characterized by bold imagination. Driven by a persistent and heartfelt urge to explain how a

¹¹⁴ *De laude* 12. 26-33 ed. CCL 64, p. 89; tr. CLARK, “Victricius of Rouen”, pp. 396-397.

fragment of a dead body could be a conduit of spiritual presence, all three of the authors discussed in this essay relied on imagery to make the invisible visible. Although their images were different – Augustine’s spiritual theatre of the mind, Prudentius’s spiritual landscapes, Victricius’s metaphors of light – their writings imply a conviction that a relic needed aesthetic enhancement in order to signify. Whether that enhancement was in the form of mental acting-out of the martyr’s drama, as in the case of Augustine, or storytelling, as in the case of Prudentius, or the glossing of theological argument with rhetorical dazzle, as in the case of Victricius, all three authors were engaged in the delicate and difficult task of integrating a fairly new form of spirituality into Christian ritual and ethics.

Seeing the invisible as though it were visible involved different kinds of invisibility. On the one hand, it involved ideas. The belief that spiritual power was operative in relics, for example, was an abstract idea, something ‘invisible’, as it were, that needed sensory expression in the form of lively mental images to make it tangible. On the other hand, the martyrs themselves were also ‘invisible’ (even if fragments of their bodies were on display). Their valiant lives had to be recreated in such a way that their past was the venerator’s present, especially when the virtues that they exemplified were at issue. Although their techniques differed, all three authors discussed here collapsed the past into the present, Augustine by modelling how to imitate a martyr, Prudentius by making the physical landscape of the martyr coincide with his own spiritual landscape, and Victricius by positioning martyrs as indwelling figures.

Invisibility, however, was not the only problem that these interpreters faced. The fact is that they were faced with developing “strategies for retrieving visually intractable forms”, to borrow a phrase from art historian James Elkins.¹¹⁵ Relics were “visually intractable” because they were not whole bodies; their humanness, and especially their human wholeness, was something that had to be inferred. In situations such as the cult of relics provided, when one encounters (or sees with the imagining eye) a body that is not quite a body and so cannot be easily categorized, Elkins argues that understanding “depends on finding workable analogies”.¹¹⁶ His name for the attempt to find workable analogies is “visual desperation”:

¹¹⁵ J. ELKINS, *Pictures of the Body: Pain and Metamorphosis* (Stanford, 1999), p. 223.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 220. Elkins does not address the issue of relics, but I think his formulation of the problem of seeing visually intractable objects is relevant in this context.

“Visual desperation” is a name for a peculiarly strained and anxious seeing that casts about, trying to construct analogies and retrieve an unknown form into the fold of vision. When it succeeds, we complacently classify what we’ve seen as human, animal, plant, or fabulous beast. When it fails, we become blind – we see only chaos or trackless monstrosity.¹¹⁷

To attribute a case of “visual desperation” to Augustine, Prudentius, and Victricius may seem like a rhetorical flourish on my own part, but, as Peter Brown has pointed out, anxieties about death, physical disintegration, and bodily reintegration lay close to the surface of late ancient thinking about martyrs and the cult of relics.¹¹⁸ For interpreters, there was a real problem in trying to deal at once with the horror of dismemberment and the belief in restored integrity. The dramatic and forceful imagery of evocations of the meaning of relics suggests that relics were indeed fearfully odd – fragments that were no longer quite recognizable and so both like and unlike the reality of the living – and that they needed elaborate analogies in order to bring them alive. In my view, the pictorial strategies of the authors discussed in this paper were successful resolutions of the particular form of visual desperation that pertained to the cult of relics.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ BROWN, *Cult of the Saints*, pp. 82-83.

Augustine and the Return of the Senses

M.B. PRANGER

Of all the Church Fathers Augustine's oeuvre stands out for being assessed by posterity in terms of the author's own psychological, philosophical and religious development. There is no need for surprise here since Augustine's *Confessions* seems to offer to the would-be interpreter, then and now, a firm basis for reading his work as a traceable process moving from paganism, through Manichaeism and Neoplatonism, to Christianity. This evolutionary view of the matter is further strengthened by Augustine's self-confessed hesitancy to take the final step. Unlike illustrious predecessors such as Paul and Anthony, Augustine's own conversion was not caused by a thunderbolt-like experience, either as a blinding light from heaven or disguised as the overwhelming voice of the Gospel reading. As for him, the "*tolle lege*", although sounding out of the blue, is firmly embedded in the rhetorical build-up of suspense and hesitancy, and cannot, in that respect, be compared to Paul's Damascus experience or Anthony's sudden change of heart. As a matter of fact, when borrowing Paul's post-conversion inner struggle as symbolised by the dividing presence of conflicting wills, Augustine, while tailoring Pauline language to his own needs, pre-dates it, so to speak, making it part and parcel of the thorny path leading up to Christian grace rather than maintaining its original role as representing the tensions between spirit and flesh within the Christian soul.

Now no one would deny that Augustine's thought has indeed developed in different stages more or less distinctly recognisable as Manichaeism, Neoplatonism, Academism, and Christianity. And corresponding to these different stages were ever so many 'discourses' and vocabularies, the last one of which, the Christian-biblical discourse, though ultimately victorious, met with consider-

able resistance in the shape of Augustine's classically trained ear and eye. One of the most prominent discourses persistently present in the Augustinian amalgam is the language of philosophy. Thus – to give just one example – discussing, in an early treatise like *Soliloquia*, the nature of true knowledge, ample attention is paid to the role of the divine light and the interior master illuminating the intellect, a phenomenon that can easily be identified as a slightly christianised version of Neoplatonic tenets. Similarly, later confrontations with the language of the Bible can be seen to result into a blend of various discourses, in which, due to the supremacy of biblical language, the more philosophical dimensions became increasingly shaded although their presence kept being felt at all times. In this paper I shall argue that precisely this blend of various discourses provides Augustine with the opportunity to 'invent' his own creative (to put it anachronistically) mosaic of ideas. Thus with regard to the subject-matter of this paper, the blend of two opposite problems, the tangibility of the material world on the one hand and divinely numinous on the other, will prove to take on an unexpected shape that can neither be explained in terms of (Neoplatonic) philosophy nor by the biblical discourse *tout court*. It will have to be assessed in its own terms.

Not surprisingly, this blend of discourses hampers attempts to interpret Augustinian writing from a single point of view, or, for that matter, from the viewpoint of one of the discourses that, over a long period of time, have gone into the making and remaking of Augustine. If we add to this problem the fact, that, if assessed from a single viewpoint, many of Augustine's ideas seem to suffer from inconsistency, inadequacy and incompleteness, the foundation is laid not only for a rich afterlife of so 'spacious' a legacy, but also, and in a sense more urgently, for a great number of aporias inside Augustinian thought itself. An example of the latter which became apparent even during Augustine's lifetime, is the way he got, willy-nilly, entangled in the philosophical intricacies of predestination. After starting out as a staunch defender of the sovereignty of grace against the Pelagian view of free will, Augustine proved unable to stop himself, his discourse, that is, stretching that which had begun as a defence of gift and grace into a philosophy-laden concept. Precisely the philosophical superiority of his last opponent in this matter, Julian of Eclanum, brought to the surface the gaps and holes in a concept that might have looked powerful from a religious-rhetorical perspective but was in need of further precision, to say the least, when defended against a skilled dialectician. Ever since, the question whether that precision could be given at all has been hovering over the predestinarian debate. I will discuss the problem of predestination briefly at the end of this paper, but first I want to give another example of an incomplete,

philosophical view that has been a cause for debate, not during Augustine's lifetime, but in the long afterlife of scholastic philosophy.

In a number of works Augustine has confronted a philosophical problem with a long prehistory and an even longer afterlife. How is sense perception processed into intellectual knowledge? The presence of a mixture of Stoic and Platonic influences complicates this question considerably and makes it hard to square notions of sense impression, of forms and images by which this impression is contained with that which is beyond the bodily experience, the intellect and the soul, the problem being that the latter cannot be influenced, affected or informed by the body.¹ The way Augustine assesses this problem in his *De trinitate* has been lucidly described by Leen Spruit in his *Species Intelligibilis*:

... there is a chain of species originating in corporeal reality and reaching up, through senses and memory, to the "*acies cogitantis*" ... The Augustinian notion of a chain of species between sensible reality and the human mind does not entail that the species is impressed in a purely passive way upon the cognitive faculties. Indeed, Augustine's views on (impressed) species and the related type of cognition are intrinsically ambivalent. Augustine holds that the soul receives species from the body. But we have seen that this assumption does not exclude an active role of the human soul in perception and cognition. This ambivalence raises subtle problems of interpretation and one should not be surprised at the inadequate readings of many medieval authors. On the one hand, Augustine follows the Stoic doctrine of the origin of sensible knowledge in impressed forms, images, similitudes or species. On the other hand, he claims that the body cannot exert any influence on the soul. Thus, he is bound to reject the existence of forms or species originating in bodily reality and impressed upon the immaterial soul. The impression is strictly confined to the senses, which mediate between sensible reality and the mental realm.²

It goes without saying that the *lacunae* in Augustine 'philosophy' have invited later generations to fill them up or to provide alternatives. In that respect the title of one of Gilson's articles, "Pourquoi saint Thomas a-t-il critiqué saint Augustin?"³ is quite telling, explaining as it does, still acting on the assumption that Thomistic scholasticism is to be seen as an intellectual elaboration on, and improvement of, earlier attempts at a Christian philosophy, that the insufficiencies of Augustinian Platonism, in particular the doctrine of illumination of

¹ L. SPRUIT, *Species Intelligibilis: From Sense Perception to Knowledge*, 2 vols. (Leiden, 1994), 1, p. 180.

² SPRUIT, *Species Intelligibilis*, p. 185.

³ E. GILSON, "Pourquoi saint Thomas a-t-il critiqué saint Augustin?", *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Âge* 1 (1926-1927), pp. 5-127.

the intellect, could be resolved in a supplementary way by introducing Aristotle. In the eyes of Gilson, replacing the illumination of the intellect by the *intellectus agens* and the concept of abstraction, bridged the gap, left unaccounted for by Augustine, between the realm of the senses and the realm of the intellect.

Now the question whether or not Augustine is to be called a professional philosopher is in itself of little importance, even less so since it is agreed nowadays that scholastic readings cannot and should not be projected back into the loosely argued 'philosophy' of Augustine.⁴ Yet problems do arise when at the same time scholars can be seen to keep resorting to broadly philosophical categories in order to defend the coherence of Augustine's thought. Thus so prominent a concept as Augustinian interiorisation up to and including the 'ideal' presence of the city of God, are generally assumed to be rooted in Neoplatonism, as indeed dynamic tensions between inner and outer, although not lacking (increasingly so) in Pauline connotation, spring from the same philosophical source. In short, although it is widely acknowledged that there are many different elements that constitute Augustine's thought, it is – and has always – been tempting to use a roughly Platonic model in order to establish coherence of a kind; a role, by the bye, that has been assigned to Platonism over the ages, suited as the latter has proved to be to lay bare the dynamic dimensions of the human mind as it wanders from outer to inner, from darkness to light (and back), without losing its centre and unity. It is my contention, however, that, although, in view of its all-embracing nature and all-pervasive presence, there is something to the Platonic strand in Augustine's thought, it should not be considered to constitute its infrastructure.

Of course, Augustine's philosophical weakness looks much less alarming when assessed within the wider context of his thought. As the *Confessions* testify, Augustine was not after philosophical accuracy when reading the *libri Platonici*, but, rather, the liberation from the material constraints of Manichaeism, achieved, at last, through the discovery of the spiritual nature of the divine.⁵ As for his later reflections on the subject of sense perception and intellectual knowledge, they clearly function within a religious frame focusing on the nature of the creation (book 12 and 13 of the *Confessiones*, *De Genesi ad*

⁴ This is partly true and partly wishful thinking on my part, as is proven by the recent *Cambridge Companion to Augustine* (Cambridge, 2001) which, some excellent contributions notwithstanding, is characterised by an overall approach to Augustine from an a-historical, analytical-philosophical point of view.

⁵ Augustinus, *Confessiones*, book 7, ed. P. KNÖLL, revised edn. by M. SKUTELLA (Leipzig, 1934: CSEL 33).

litteram) or the way in which reality is structured according to a trinitarian model (*De trinitate*) or, for that matter, history is governed by invisible causes (*De civitate dei*). Yet, although such a different contextual framework may account for the lack of philosophical accuracy, it does not offer a full-fledged key to understanding Augustine, or, more precisely, any possible structure of his thought.

To illustrate the, mainly negative, points I have made so far, let us turn to the *Confessions*. Obviously, this work abounds with a great number of themes and issues. First, there is the narrative, the autobiographical account of Augustine's life from his sinful youth to the moment of his conversion; and yet the *Confessions* are not contained by the narrative frame. Not only does the work extend to different themes ranging from the discussion of memory and time to a hexaemeron. Also the narrative itself is far from self-sufficient since it hinges on powers beyond the reach of story telling. An analysis of the finest biography on Augustine ever written could prove the point. If Peter Brown's classic, *Augustine of Hippo*,⁶ moves on a plane on which the refined, almost neurotic, unrest of Augustine's mind is delicately matched by the biographical discourse, on closer inspection the means Brown has used to shape the life of his hero, however disguised in the latter's vocabulary, owe as much to modern psychology as to the sources at hand. In fact – once more on closer inspection – the subtle way events and themes in Augustine's life are being linked, although drawn from the source material itself, would reveal gaps and holes, filled up and glued together by the hand of the author.

As such there is nothing unusual in this discrepancy between source material and the historian. But problems do come to the fore if we inquire into the exact status of Brown's 'psychological' affinity and that part of Augustine that resists being covered, or, for that matter, cannot be covered by that affinity. Next, and running through both the autobiographical account and the reflective parts, is the – literary – production of imagery culminating in the vision of Ostia which depicts Augustine and his mother reaching out beyond the images and language of this world to the invisible and eternal. And yet neither the discussion of temporal imagery nor the vision at Ostia are contained by the subtle shift from the temporal to the eternal, from the visible to the invisible.

The same argument applies even to the confessions as a rhetorical genre. Although undoubtedly the *Confessions* is what the title announces it to be: 'confessions', it is not contained by it in the way *Ab urbe condita* both contains and is contained by the story of Rome from its foundation to the author's life and times or. Nor would the *Confessions*, appearances notwithstanding, qualify

⁶ P. BROWN, *Augustine of Hippo* (London, 1967).

as a *mémoire*, or, in a wider sense, as a treatise on memory both autobiographical and structural, however prominent and deep the discussion of memory in book 10 may be.

All this is not, of course, to say that the various components listed above (rhetorical structure, philosophical argument, mystical experience) are meaningless or should be disregarded when trying to characterise Augustine's thought. What I do want to point out is that none of those aspects can stand on its own feet, or, to put it differently, support the dynamics of Augustinian thought. For that a different poetics – as the simultaneous presence of the 'theory' and the practice of reading – is needed that does justice to the entirety of the Augustinian 'drive' rather than isolating the various topics dealt with in his work. As far as this simultaneity of poetical practice and theory is concerned, one of the most effective 'destroyers' of modern literature, Samuel Beckett, may help us to get a better grip on the matter. About Beckett's play *Endgame* Hugh Kenner once wrote perceptively: "the play contains whatever ideas we discern inside it: no idea contains the play".⁷ It would be far from Kenner, and Beckett, to proclaim here a (caricature of) post-modern liberty to read into the play any idea that comes to mind. Beckett was far too meticulous an author and, as far as the performance of his plays is concerned, a director to allow for unlimited freedom of execution. Kenner's remark rather points to precision, to the diamond-like hardness of the text, whether written or performed, which reduces efforts to embrace and contain the play with an 'idea' to secondary non-sense. Suppose, for instance, one tries to read the play as telling us something about the grimness of human communication,⁸ such a liberty would be freely granted; yet to claim that the play would be *about* human communication would be wide of the mark. Such a move would be ridiculed, be broken off, fragmented and absorbed by other, more powerful and denser mechanisms at play 'contained' by the untouchable wit with which (non-) communicative language is charged.

In more than one respect Augustine's text would seem to profit from a Beckett-like assessment. Elsewhere I have experimented with a 'Beckettian' reading of the *Confessions* removing narrative containment by depriving it of plot.⁹ Similar deconstructions could be applied to all the dimensions listed

⁷ H. KENNER, *Samuel Beckett: A Critical Study* (London, 1962), p. 163.

⁸ Like *Waiting for Godot*, Beckett's *Endgame* is about delay and postponement. "Do you believe in the life to come?" 'Mine was always that' "(SAMUEL BECKETT, *The Complete Dramatic Works* (London, 1986), p. 116).

⁹ M.B. PRANGER, "Time and narrative in Augustine's *Confessiones*", *The Journal of Religion* 81 (2001), pp. 377-394.

above, from the philosophical argument to religious and mystical experience. And some further light could even be shed on the transition from perception to knowledge and back. But in order to be more specific, a more precise insight is required into the nature of *Confessions* and 'confessions', into the driving principle, that is, that links and cuts off images, speech and thought while governing the discourse from beginning to end. Here too Beckett might be of some help. Defending another work (in progress) that, much to the horror of literary critics, appeared not contained by any idea while inviting the reader to read it in its ideal richness, the nascent *Finnegans Wake*, he refers to Augustine in so many words:

When the sense is sleep, the words go to sleep ... When the sense is dancing, the words dance ... The very words are tilted and effervescent. How can we qualify this general aesthetic vigilance without which we cannot hope to snare the sense which is for ever rising to the surface of the form and becoming the form itself? St. Augustine puts us on the track of a word with his '*intendere*'.¹⁰

We would do less than justice to both Augustine and Beckett if we were to interpret *intendere* either as somehow moving out of the linguistic realm in its linguistic capacity or as an underlying focus of the mind on coherence, philosophical, narratological or otherwise. Focus for Augustine, as indeed for Beckett, is directed at the indivisible moment of the *praesens praesentis* as it manifests itself to the eye of the beholder or the ear of the listener condensed, as it were, in the seeing- and hearing capacities of the inner man. All this would be quite unproblematic if this manifestation of the present would have any extension. In that case Augustinian intention would fit in nicely with a narrative, a philosophical argument or a religious meditation. It would be contained by an idea. However, as far as Augustine is concerned, that kind of support is not on offer. The very nature of time as the *praesens praesentis* wipes out any such supporting frame. The way Augustine, in book 11, develops his argument about time makes this abundantly clear. Any attempt to grasp and contain time, for instance, by identifying it with movement or any other physical entity, is bound to fail. Yet it is by time that we measure movement and anything else:

We measure by time and say "It was standing still for the same time that it was in movement", or "It was still for two or three times as long as it was in movement", or any other measurement we may make, either by precise observation or by a

¹⁰ S[amuel] BECKETT, *Our Exagmination round his Incamination of Work in Progress* (Paris, 1929; London, 1961), p. 14. Beckett is characterising Joyce's *Work in Progress* here as it slowly developed into *Finnegans Wake*, defending it against its detractors.

rough estimate (we customarily say "more or less"). Therefore time is not the movement of a body.¹¹

So, like Beckett's play, time is not contained by anything while at the same time 'containing any idea we may discern in it'.

Of course, we know that there is an extension of sorts in time insofar it is being measured by the mind in the distension of the soul, the *distentio animi*.

So it is in you, my mind, that I measure periods of time (*tempora*). Do not distract me; that is, do not allow yourself to be distracted by the hubbub of the impressions (*turbis affectionum*) made upon you. In you, I affirm, I measure periods of time. The impression which passing events make upon you abides when they are gone. That present consciousness (= *affectio*) is what I am measuring, not the stream of past events which have caused it.¹²

Now on the basis of this cursory sketch of the transition from sensory impression to inner, spiritual and intellectual, mental stability, no appropriate theory of knowledge can be construed, let alone that the exact point of transition or, for that matter, a *species intelligibilis*, could be pinpointed. The reason for this failure is not only Augustine's so-called 'philosophical' inaccuracy, but also, and to a greater extent, the fact that knowledge does not play an ultimately structural, 'containing' role, but time. In its turn the latter does so by way of condensation and by imposing a frameless structure:

And who would deny that the present time lacks extension because it passes in a point? But yet the attention lasts (*sed tamen attentio perdurat*) through which what will be present moves towards absence. That is why future time, which does not exist, is not long. A long future rather is a long expectation of the future; nor is past time, which does not exist, long. Rather a long past is a long remembrance of the past.¹³

Evidently, this passage contains a paradox. Time lacking extension is an indivisible *punctum* yet at the same time attention is continuous. That being so it does not suffice to say that Augustine's is a subjective concept of time based on the *distentio animi* in the guise of the shortening of expectation and the lengthening of remembrance. In a way neither expectation nor remembrance

¹¹ Augustinus, *Confessiones*, XI, XXIV, 31; tr. H. CHADWICK, *Confessions* (Oxford, 1992), p. 239.

¹² Augustinus, *Confessiones*, XI, XXVII, 36; tr. CHADWICK, *Confessions*, p. 242.

¹³ Augustinus, *Confessiones*, XI, XXVIII, 37; my translation.

are allowed to extend at all in the grip as they are of the present time. Consequently, “continuous attention (*attentio [quae] perdurat*)” is the core of the paradox, on the one hand allowing for extension and on the other representing the hold of present attention over memory or expectancy. Granted that time is the nucleus of Augustine’s thought, representing creation in its intrinsically temporal appearance, the idea that contains all ‘creative’ extensions without being contained by anything else, this final skeleton of creation is conspicuously ambiguous. For, as Augustine’s example of Ambrose’s hymn *Deus creator omnium* illustrating the measurement of time makes clear the hymn, while being fragmented through recitation which makes it move from future to past, does not cease to be continuously and integrally present in mind of the person who measures.¹⁴ Keeping this ambiguity underlying the permanent focus (*attentio perdurat*) in mind, it does not come as a surprise that all other issues touched upon in the *Confessions* such as the spiritual nature of God, the non-existence of evil, the presence of different wills in the mind, the transition from sense- to intellectual knowledge in one way or another share in this ‘ambiguity’.

As a consequence, the *lacunae* that can be detected in Augustine’s thought such as the philosophical inconsistencies or the lack of reflection on the way how images are produced and intellectual knowledge is established, have to be assessed against the backdrop of a more important and more basic ambiguity inside the notion of time, by which it turns out to be governed. In my view this is the only way to do justice to the structure of the *Confessions*, and, *mutatis mutandis*, to the structure of Augustine thought *qua* confession. Any attempt to furnish the *Confessions* with a philosophical or any other frame would be premature and fall under the verdict of Beckett’s razor. For ‘confession’ being the at once the frame and the performative of action turns the *Confessions*, before, during and after dealing with issues ranging from biography to philosophy and meditation, into a permanent focus, a continuous attention as an uninterrupted effort to hold on to the moment of integrity as revealed and given in the “*tolle lege*”, or the vision at Ostia, in short, as the gift of grace and perseverance.

It is this permanent focus and continuous attention that raise the question of the status of Augustinian interiority. What about the interior aspects of “this general aesthetic vigilance without which we cannot hope to snare the sense which is for ever rising to the surface of the form and becoming the form itself?” If focus is supposed to be uninterrupted how does one account for another hallmark of Augustinian sensitivity, the turn inward into the inner

¹⁴ Cf. *Confessiones*, XI, XXVII, 35.

recesses of the mind, into “the fields and vast palaces of memory”,¹⁵ where the descent of the mind into its inner self turns out to coincide with its ascent into the divine? How then does one account for the moment of rupture and rapture, of transformation of the visible into the invisible and *vice versa*?

If we take the vision at Ostia as the ultimate expression of the one visionary moment at which the mind touches upon eternity and finds itself at the furthest distance possible from the world of the senses and even of the intellect, matters would seem to be simple enough. Far removed from the madding crowd mother and son transcend the “bodily senses, the tumult of the flesh, the past and the future” and “while we talked and panted after it (*dum loquimur et inhiamus illi*), we touched it [eternal wisdom] in some small degree by a moment of total concentration of the heart (*toto ictu cordis*)”,¹⁶ or, as expressed even more vehemently at the second attempt: “That is how it was when at that moment we extended our reach and in a flash of mental energy attained the eternal wisdom which abides beyond all things”. But note how even this ultimate moment of rapture is preceded, not by visionary but by auditory language: “we hear without these things [i.e. the silent ‘speaking’ of created things] (*ipsum sine his audimus*)”. Now an obsessively mystical reading of this text emphasizing the latter’s Neoplatonic infrastructure, would inevitably and justifiably highlight the unique moment of supratemporality including the standard display of disappointment with regard to the lack of durability: “if only it could last (*si continetur ...*)”. However, on closer inspection the “*dum loquimur et inhiamus illi*” appears to play a more prominent part than the force of oblivion resulting from the ecstatic moment of mystical union – if that is the right expression which, of course, it is not – would seem to suggest. Not only does Augustine fail to express the moment brought about by the *ictus cordis* in terms of vision, of seeing the invisible.¹⁷ He also makes it abundantly clear that, vanished though the moment of eternity’s touchdown may have into thin air, the entire process, both the rhetorical build-up and the unique moment of *ictus cordis*, is and remains embedded in speech: “*dum loquimur*”. If Augustine subsequently concludes this episode with some reservation as to the verbatim rendering of the linguistic exchange between his mother and himself, he nonetheless keeps it all firmly within conversational bounds.

¹⁵ Augustinus, *Confessiones*, X, VIII, 12.

¹⁶ Augustinus, *Confessiones*, IX, X, 24; tr. CHADWICK, *Confessions*, p. 171.

¹⁷ Even the *via negativa* is expressed in terms of sonority: *sileant*. Yet visual terms are not lacking altogether: “*spectatorem, si continetur hoc et subtrahantur aliae visiones longe inparis generis*”.

I said something like this, even if not just in this way and with exactly these words. Yet, Lord, you know that on that day when we had this conversation, and this world with all its delights became worthless to us as we talked on (*inter verba*) ... my mother said: "what have I to do here?" (*quid hic facio?*)¹⁸

Of course, I do not want to deny that some elements of vision are in play here. So much is clear, however, that, apart from the mentioning of other visions of "a vastly inferior kind" which should ideally give way to the continuity of the *praesens praesentis*, 'the vision at Ostia', at its zenith, is not expressed in terms of vision but in terms of touch (*attingere*). Speculatively speaking, that has to do with the issue of time, Augustine's efforts, in other words, depicted at length in book 8, to hold on to the moment of *continentia* vocally acquired at the moment of hearing the "*tolle lege*" and reading the Pauline words, to touch the flow of time so as "to lay hold on the heart and give it fixity, so that for some little moment it may be stable, and for a fraction of time may grasp the splendour of constant eternity".¹⁹

But before discussing the language of the senses, spiritual or otherwise, in more detail, let us first elaborate on the conversational setting within which the 'vision' is embedded. Thus one might point to the narrative frame such as the ominous opening words of the story, not so much of the vision at Ostia, but, rather, of the momentous events to come and be narrated in which the power and the glory of the mother is to be comprised, the death of Monica. "While we were at Ostia by the mouth of the Tiber, my mother died. I pass over many events because I write in great haste (*multa praetereo, quia multum festino*)".²⁰ Admittedly, the "great haste" is primarily to be seen as a narrative device inserted in order to dramatise that which has been looming over the narrative for some time (that is, ever since the "*tolle lege*"-scene in book 8 in view of the fact that, evidently, with Augustine's conversion his mother's lifework was completed), the imminent death of Monica. At the same time the confessional structure of the *Confessions* changes any fixed point of view subsuming even the *festino* under the auspices of memory and time, of the reflecting and confessing bishop trying to recount how once upon a time the "impression (*affectio*) made by passing events" on the mind, including the earthly vicissitudes of his nearest and dearest, have left an abiding effect after they have passed and it is that "present consciousness (*praesens*)" that is being measured by the confessing, narrating and contemplating bishop, not "the stream of past

¹⁸ Augustinus, *Confessiones*, IX, XI, 28; tr. CHADWICK, *Confessions*, p. 173.

¹⁹ Augustinus, *Confessiones*, XI, XI, 13; tr. CHADWICK, *Confessions*, p. 228.

²⁰ Augustinus, *Confessiones*, IX, VIII, 17; tr. CHADWICK, *Confessions*, p. 166.

events that has caused it (*non ea quae praeterierunt*)".²¹ This abiding presence ("*affectio ... manet*") – abiding for what it is worth – sheds a new light on both the narrative ('I pass over many events because I write in great haste') and the touching upon the moment of eternity in the so-called vision at Ostia during which mother and son seem to be lifted up beyond time and discursivity. The one and the other are in the grip of *confessio*, the uninterrupted act of establishing a present in the face of God.

This means that the narrative, as, for instance, the 'grand' narrative of Monica's life and death, is being deprived of plot, to the same extent that the vision at Ostia is being deprived of vision while, paradoxically, both the dynamic drive of the *festino* and the intensity of mother and son touching eternity are being intensified. What the memorial and temporal structure of the *Confessions* does not allow for is a separate treatment of either story or vision outside the permanent focus of confession and continuous attention. Consequently, the vision at Ostia can no longer be read as a straight account of a mystical experience just as the story of Monica's death can no longer be read as a straight account of maternal triumph by death followed by filial sorrow. Either 'event' is perforce to be telescoped through the lens of an atomic focus rising from the depths of memory and governed by the acute presence of time. In this respect quoting Ambrose's hymn mentioned above, *Deus creator omnium*, at the end of book 9, tells it all. It is in the integral presence of the hymn in the memorial mind of the singer or narrator that both the life of Monica and the vision at Ostia are, as it were, reflected. Before being measured by being broken down into future and past, they are being presented, contained and 'spoken' because for one indivisible moment, the past (*fuisse*) and the future (*futurum esse*) yield to the *esse solum*, mere being, that is, to the present time.

So far my argument seems simple enough. On entering the realm of narrative and vision we have to pass by a 'general aesthetic vigilance' in the guise of *confessio*. Like a watchdog this permanent focus prevents our readings and thoughts from spreading out freely and in an unchecked fashion into the vast fields of philosophy, storytelling and religion but, rather, channels them through the vast fields of memory. This being so, it slowly dawns upon us that the majestic ascent of the soul by and beyond the temporal and the creation as described in the 'vision at Ostia' – all of creation meanwhile crying out while falling silent: "we did not make ourselves, we were made by him who abides in eternity" – is not simply a matter of moving from the senses to the intellect and beyond. The relationship between the visible and invisible is far from straight and simple as well and, in a sense, no *itinerarium mentis in deum* is offered

²¹ Augustine, *Confessiones*, XI, XI, 36.

here. Not only would Augustine prove himself to be a poor philosopher here by failing to explain exactly how the *affectio* caused by the senses is transformed by the intellect and is further handled in depth by the interior mind and memory. More important, invisible though it may be, the eternal has been hovering over the search for wisdom and the mystical ascent all along, not as an unshakeable and ever touchable *fixum*, but as an elusive yet all pervasive presence. Consequently, so much is clear that the dividing lines between the sensible and the intellectual and spiritual do not coincide with the dividing lines between the temporal and the eternal, or, more precisely, with the intrinsic presence of time and eternity in the shape of a mutual embrace. At the same time, this mutual embrace explains why neither vision, as the protracted journey from the visible to the invisible, nor narrative as the protracted journey from birth to death or, for that matter, from unbelief to conversion, from incontinence to continence, however confessional, is capable of constituting in itself the framework of reality, of time and history or, more comprehensively yet, of the universe. So confessional vigilance means at once more and less than a permanent focus on the invisible. More so, since the invisible is closer by ("*tu autem eras interior intimo meo*")²² and more visible, and, in any case, more audible, more *inter verba*, than any romanticism of mere invisibility would seem to suggest; less so, since its temporal status guarantees no duration or continuity, but, if continuity there must be, only a series of intermittent moments.

As for the sweetness of visibility, there are of course the so-called spiritual senses that seem to fill in the gaps left by the removal of sense experience. And there is no denying the suggestive power of Augustine's language in book 10 through which he evokes, and in a sense, colours the *esse solum* touched upon in the vision at Ostia:

But when I love you, what do I love? It is not physical beauty nor temporal glory not the brightness of light dear to earthly eyes, nor the sweet melodies of all kinds of songs, not the gentle odour of flowers and ointments and perfumes, nor manna or honey, nor limbs welcoming the embraces of the flesh; it is not these I love when I love my God. Yet there is a light I love, and a food, and a kind of embrace of my inner man, where my soul is floodlit by light which space cannot contain, where there is sound that time cannot seize, where there is a perfume which no breeze disperses, where there is a taste for food no amount of eating can lessen, and where there is a bond of union that no satiety can part. That is what I love when I love my God.²³

²² Augustinus, *Confessions* III, VI, 11.

²³ Augustinus, *Confessiones*, X, VI, 8; tr. CHADWICK, *Confessions*, p. 183.

But here too time and memory perform their job at once healing and devastating. Rather than being a duplication of sorts of the senses proper, the spiritual senses are guided by and processed through time and as such they serve as stepping stones into the vast fields of memory and oblivion only to be suspended and tied, so to speak, with the saving moment of the “*sero te amavi*”: “late have I loved you, beauty so old and so new; late have I loved you”.²⁴ Moving and pictorially satisfactory though this language of the spiritual senses may be, its being tied with time reveals at the same time the fragile fabric it is made of. No longer being part and parcel of a marked process of interiorisation since the markers of interiority have taken on the guise of time, the vast fields of memory turn out to be vertical and fathomless rather than stretched out and horizontal. Thus vision, touch and audibility, purged of their material content, are being intensified rising as they do from the unfathomable depths of memory constituting time the very moment they touch the surface and meet the real, corporeal senses on their way inward. In my opinion, we here touch upon the possible sweetness of Augustine’s rendering of the invisible as well as on its very grimness; sweet thanks to the strength of verbal and pictorial odour, grim since there is no guarantee whatsoever of any continuity of the moments of continence, integrity and fixity, of a sustained present that is not on its way out.

Our historiographical impotence to take in this simultaneity of sweetness and grimness is one result of Augustine’s overpowering role in the shaping of western thought which has tended to obscure the fact that at the very centre of his thought lie some unsolved aporias. The very fact that those aporias have mainly been transmitted in the guise of solutions, has contributed greatly to our historiographical impotence. If asked to describe what to me seems to be the major Augustinian aporia I would point to the following paradox: how to reconcile the mutual embrace of time and eternity representing at once a deep, black hole inside human experience as the fundamental inability to know things, that is, the human condition – as they are with the epiphanic visibility of *facts*. For all the changes that may have occurred in the course of Augustine’s mind-set, this inexplicable combination of momentary presence and an underlying unfathomability, in one way or another, represents a continuity. In that respect the intricacies of predestination are less alien to the early Augustine than many an interpreter may have thought. Discussing, in *Ad Simplicianum*, the classic question why Esau was not called in the same way as Jacob, Augustine, rather than probing into the depths of divine and human decision making, parades a number of biblical characters who can be *seen* to make decisions but whose motives for that decision cannot be explained: Simeon,

²⁴ Augustinus, *Confessiones*, 10, XXVII, 38; tr. CHADWICK, *Confessions*, p. 201.

who believed in Jesus when the latter was only a little child, Peter when exclaiming that Jesus was truly the Son of God, the disciples on seeing water transformed into wine

He invited many to faith by speaking, and yet many did not believe even though people were resurrected from the dead. When he was hanging on the cross and dying even his disciples started to become frightened and to falter, and yet the robber did believe that very same moment when he saw Him, no longer standing out because of spectacular deeds but as a fellow victim on the cross. After his resurrection, one of the disciples only believed it was Him, not when he saw Him alive in all parts of his body but when he was shown his scars; and many of those by whom he was crucified and who had watched him perform miracles had despised him whereas, when his disciples preached Him and performed miracles in his name they became believers. When, therefore, people are moved to accept faith in different ways, and when often one and the same thing when phrased in a particular way moves and, when phrased in a different way, does not move, and, furthermore, may move one person but fail to move another, who then would dare to say that God has been deficient in the particular way of his calling, through which Esau too could apply his mind and join his will to that faith in which Jacob has been justified?²⁵

So much then for vision and visibility. But what about the invisible? Perhaps we are closer to Beckett's *Endgame* here than we realise. "When the sense is sleep, the words go to sleep ...". The permanent focus, the *intendere*, required to catch this moment of real hearing, seeing and touching, brings to light the invisible. But in how paradoxical a fashion! Like Beckett, Augustine seems to turn interiority and its lookalikes around and present us with eternity's visibility in the shape of hard-core moments of saying the word and heeding the call, not unlike those of the "*tolle lege*" and the touching – *atingere* – of the *esse solum*. Squeezed into the epiphanic time-cells of human decision making, of heeding or not heeding the divine call, those moments, even if they concern one and the same person – such as Augustine's *persona* in the *Confessions* – are at once eternal and intermittent and as such both sweeter and grimmer than can ever be grasped.

²⁵ *De diversis quaestionibus ad Simplicianum*, I, quaestio 2, 14, ed. in: *PL* 40, col 119.

“*Divinos Concipe Sensus*”: Envisioning Divine Wonders in Paulinus of Nola and Gregory of Tours

GISELLE DE NIE

The sudden cure of a blind man during the festive translation in Milan of the martyrs Gervasius and Protasius's remains into Bishop Ambrose's (ca. 340-397) church in 385 is one of the best-known events in a fascinating and still not fully explored phenomenon in that period: Christian miracles, absent from public view since the apostolic age, returning into prominence as visible manifestations of the invisible divine reality.¹ How slowly, nevertheless, existing clerical attitudes toward miracles might change is evident in one of Augustine's (354-430) remarks in the early 390's. Although he had been in Milan during the incident, he writes that miracles such as those described in the apostolic age were not happening in his day because they were no longer necessary for conversion. It was only the sudden avalanche of miracles in his own episcopal city of Hippo in the middle 420's, precipitated by the arrival there of the proto-martyr Stephen's relics, that finally caused him to change his view.²

¹ Aurelius Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* [hereafter CD], 22, 8, ed. B. DOMBART and A. KALB (Turnhout, 1955: CCSL 48), p. 816-817. P. BROWN, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago, 1981: *Haskell Lectures on the History of Religions: New Series* 2), pp. 1-22, 36-37. Although the Empire was by now an officially Christian state, paganism was still entrenched among the Roman aristocracy, who tended to remain attached to their ancient forms and powers; cf. J. GEFFCKEN, *The Last Days of Greco-Roman Paganism*. Tr. S. MACCORMACK (Amsterdam, 1978). I am very grateful to Thomas Noble for his suggestions on the orally delivered version of this paper, and to Karl Morrison for his extremely penetrating and detailed advice on subsequent written versions.

² Augustinus, *De utilitate credendi*, 16, 34, ed. J. ZYCHA (Prague etc., 1891: CSEL 25),

The first catalogues of local miracles associated with relics in the west also seem to have appeared relatively late; the ones that have survived were produced from about 420 onwards.³ Less well-known is that there is a substantially earlier written testimony of such miracles: in the poems written around 400 by the Gallo-Roman country gentleman-monk Paulinus (*ca.* 353–431) about the deeds of the dead martyr Felix of Nola. Perhaps overlooked in this context because they are embedded in what might look like classicizing literary entertainment for the elite, they nevertheless are the first – one might say: experimental – attempt at a literary representation of what must have been experienced by many as a new phenomenon. Paulinus, a highly educated poet, described the contemporary miracles that came to his knowledge in lengthy verses combining biblical imagery, Vergilian aesthetics and highly decorated poetic language. While instructing the local country folk about proper Christian behaviour, he attempted at the same time to show his upper-class correspondents how a true image of the divine might be meditatively and poetically envisioned by the imagination in the contours of the sensory event.

Almost two hundred years later, when the western Roman Empire had disintegrated into a conglomeration of Germanic states, and miracle stories had become part of an established hagiographical literary genre with its own non-classical conventions, another Gallo-Roman aristocrat – bishop Gregory of Tours (*ca.* 539–594) – also decided to write about the miracles he had seen and heard about. His relatively brief stories, in a biblically-inspired and colloquial kind of prose, do not overtly enlist an imaginative strategy to help envision and access invisible realities. They convince by presenting miracles as simply happening before one's eyes – assuming that the listener/reader will instantly accept the sensory events as divine epiphanies in themselves and affectively

pp. 42–44; Augustine, *De vera religione*, 25, 47, ed. K.-D. DAUR (Turnhout, 1962: CCSL 32), pp. 216–217; cited in D.P. DE VOGHT, “La théologie du miracle selon saint Augustin”, *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale* 11 (1939), p. 221. An overview of Augustine's two opposed positions in ID., “Les miracles dans la vie de saint Augustin”, *Recherches de théologie antique et médiévale* 11 (1939), pp. 5–16.

³ The first may be: *De miraculis sancti Stephani protomartyris libri duo* [henceforth MS], ed. in: *PL* 41, col. 833–854. I have analyzed its imaginative structure in: G. DE NIE, “*Oculata fides*: Imaging miracles in early fifth-century Uzalis”, to appear in *Studia Patristica* in 2005. On its being the first list of Christian miracles in the West, together with Augustine's list in CD, 22. 8 (ed. DOMBART and KALB, pp. 816–827) see: H. DELEHAYE, “Les premiers ‘Libelli miraculorum’”, *Analecta Bollandiana* (AB) 29 (1910), pp. 427–434, and ID., “Les recueils antiques de miracles des saints”, *Analecta Bollandiana* 43 (1925), pp. 80–85; and V. SAXER, *Morts, martyrs, reliques en Afrique chrétienne aux premiers siècles* (Paris, 1980), 246–254. A somewhat earlier collection is contained in a letter: Severus ep. Minoricensis, *Epistola ad omnem ecclesiam*, ed. in: *PL* 41, col. 822–832.

connect with what is seen. Gregory relies on visible, palpable facts to get his message of an active divine presence across: the visible world has become transparent to the numinous.

In what follows, I shall explore some of the similarities and differences between Paulinus's and Gregory's views on how visual imagination and/or perception could actually open the eyes of the mind and heart to invisible realities. After a sketch of their general views of what they believed they were doing in writing about contemporary manifestations of the divine in the sensory world, their – respectively: extended and condensed – descriptions of a miracle of physical and spiritual illumination, and their different envisionings of spiritual realities around a particle of the Holy Cross, will be points of condensation. The comparison reveals one aspect of the significant shift in religious mentality among the Gallo-Roman upper class that took place during the fifth and sixth centuries.⁴

1. Paulinus: "A Truly Divine Poet"

Paulinus, born into an immensely wealthy senatorial family in Aquitaine, was educated in Bordeaux by the eminent poet Ausonius.⁵ When, during his brief secular career as a high government official in Italy, he visited the shrine of Saint Felix near Nola, the there displayed evidence of the saint's miracles captured his heart; he writes that they made the faith that he had been brought up in become a living reality.⁶ His move to settle there, however, came only about fifteen years later. For then, after some tragedies in his personal life, he made a decision that became a *cause célèbre* among his contemporaries.⁷

⁴ See on this development: M. HEINZELMANN, *Bischofsherrschaft in Gallien* (Sigmaringen, 1976: *Beihefte der Francia* 5).

⁵ For Paulinus's life and works see now: D. TROUT, *Paulinus of Nola: Life, Letters and Poems* (Berkeley etc., 1999); on his world-view: C. CONYBEARE, *Paulinus Noster: Self and Symbols in the Letters of Paulinus of Nola* (Oxford, 2000). Older works are: J.T. LIENHARD, *Paulinus of Nola and Early Western Monasticism* (Köln and Bonn, 1977: *Theophaneia* 28), and P. FABRE, *Saint Paulin de Nole et l'amitié chrétienne* (Paris, 1949: *Bibliothèque des Écoles Françaises d'Athènes et de Rome* 67). Cf. W.H.C. FREND, "Paulinus of Nola and the last century of the Western Empire", *Journal of Roman Studies* 59 (1969), pp. 1-11.

⁶ *Carmina* [hereafter *Carm*] 21, vv. 365-373, ed. G. DE HARTEL, *ed. alt. suppl. aucta cur.* M. KAMPTNER (Vienna, 1999: *CSEL* 30), p. 170. On Paulinus's new kind of devotion to a (dead) saint, see BROWN, *Cult*, pp. 50-68.

⁷ See on this TROUT, *Paulinus*, pp. 53-103, and P.G. WALSH, "Paulinus of Nola and the conflict of ideologies in the fourth century", in: *Kyriakon: Festschrift für Johannes Quasten*, ed. P. GRANFIELD and J.A. JUNGEMANN, 2 vols. (Münster, 1970), 2, pp. 565-571, here p. 567.

Perhaps following the example of the recently famous and controversial hermit Anthony, he took Christ's instruction to the rich young man literally – giving the proceeds of the sale of most of his Aquitanian and Spanish estates to the poor, rejecting secular life, and embracing one of seclusion, ascetism and biblical meditation in self-exile in Nola.⁸ There, apparently ignoring the potential rights of the city's bishop, he began to build up Felix's shrine as a centre of monastic piety and popular pilgrimage with himself as the saint's representative. Again, it was a relatively novel thing to do in this period. The example of that other innovator, Ambrose – whom Paulinus is likely to have encountered when at Milan in the early 380's – may have been a model here.⁹

Paulinus's birthday poems for saint Felix, the *Natalicia*, were also something new: an adaptation of a secular Roman custom.¹⁰ They were composed and recited annually to the pilgrims and country folk gathered at Nola for the celebration of the saint's birth into heaven. The content of the miracles is, on the whole, presented in ways that ordinary, illiterate folk could understand, for instance as a lesson that God always provides or that the saint punishes those who wrong him. The allusions of the poems' elegant, decorated language, on the other hand, would have been fully understood only by Paulinus's highly educated friends and correspondents, who probably received copies.¹¹

“Conceive Apprehensions of God”

Before examining the miracle story in one of these, however, we need to look a bit more closely at what Paulinus thought he was doing with his writing

⁸ R. MARKUS, *The End of Ancient Christianity* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 34–38, regards this as a break with tradition in the contemporary Church. J. FONTAINE, “Valeurs antiques et valeurs chrétiennes dans la spiritualité des grands propriétaires terriens à la fin du IV^e siècle occidental”, in: *Epektasis*, ed. J. FONTAINE and Ch. KANNENGISSER (Paris, 1972), pp. 580–587, argues that there were important convergences between Paulinus's ascetic retreat and the Roman tradition of rural *otium*; cf. LIENHARD, *Paulinus*, pp. 33–51, 128–141.

⁹ TROUT, *Paulinus*, pp. 47–50, 161–165.

¹⁰ On of the *Natalicia*: *ibid.*, pp. 161–186.

¹¹ See on Paulinus's poetic and literary style: H. JUNOD-AMMERBAUER, “Le poète chrétien selon Paulin de Nole: l'adaptation des thèmes classiques dans les *Natalicia*”, *Revue des études augustiniennes* 21 (1975), pp. 13–55; J. FONTAINE, *La naissance de la poésie dans l'occident chrétien* (Paris, 1981), pp. 143–176; W. EVENEPOEL, “La phrase et le vers dans les *Carmina* de Paulin de Nole”, in: *Eulogia: Mélanges offerts à Antoon Bastiaensen...*, ed. G.J.M. BARTELINK *et al.* (The Hague, 1991: *Instrumenta Patristica* 24), pp. 95–108; K. KOHLWES, *Christliche Dichtung und stilistische Form bei Paulinus von Nola* (Bonn, 1979); and R.P.H. GREEN, *The Poetry of Paulinus of Nola: A Study of His Latinity* (Bruxelles, 1971: *Collection Latomus* 120).

about miracles.¹² Around the year 400,¹³ in the quiet of his rural retreat near Nola, he is composing an elegant verse letter to his poet friend Jovius, urging him to write not about ancient literary fictions such as the judgment of Paris, but about eternal realities; he writes:

Begin to devote your heart solely to divine matters so that your thoughts and sensibilities, raised from the earth, may be lifted up to God. Then, before your eyes, through an opened sky, a new light will be born; the Holy Spirit will enter with a silent movement through the opened passage and make your inmost heart quiver with a joyful breath. ... Now take up subjects congruent to your age and chaste manners and which the venerable appearance of your countenance demands: conceive apprehensions of God.

*incipi divinis tantum dare pectora rebus
subrectosque deo sensus adtollere terra.
mox oculis caelo nova lux orietur aperto
intrabitque sacer tacito per [a]perta meatu
spiritus et laeto quatiet tua viscera flatu ...
et qualem castis iam congrua moribus aetas
atque tui specimen venerabile postulat oris,
suscipe materiam, divinos concipe sensus.*¹⁴

The term *sensus* has a wide range of meanings in this period: it can be feeling, awareness or consciousness, (physical) sensation, sentiment or sensibility, thought, opinion, intelligence or comprehension, and meaning or significance.¹⁵ The first occurrence of *sensus* in this passage appears to refer to a state of awareness as well as to conscious thoughts. In the second occurrence, given that mental sensation, understanding and meaning are all involved as being 'conceived', I have chosen to translate it with the wide-ranging term 'apprehensions'. The passage just quoted has been described as "a quasi-mystical theory of inspiration" – evident also in some of the prologues to the *Natalicia*

¹² I have discussed these views in connection with his pictorial images in Nola in: G. DE NIE, "Paulinus of Nola and the image within the image", in: *Reading Images and Texts: Medieval Images and Texts as Forms of Communication*, ed. M. HAGEMAN and M. MOSTERT (Turnhout, 2004: Utrecht Studies in Medieval Literacy 8), pp. 1-28. There is some unavoidable overlap with the present article.

¹³ On the poem's date see: P.G. WALSH, *The Poems of St. Paulinus of Nola* (New York-Ramsey, NJ, 1975: *Ancient Christian Writers* 40), p. 391. I have made my own translations and included the Latin only where the exact Latin wording is important.

¹⁴ *Carm* 22, vv. 4-8, 17-19, pp. 186-187.

¹⁵ A. BLAISE, *Dictionnaire Latin-Français des Auteurs chrétiens* (Turnhout, 1954), p. 752. I have attempted to render the – possibly multivalent – meaning intended in each case.

– and Paulinus’s allusive poetry as “a spiritual art”.¹⁶ In the prologue to an early poem, a poeticized history of saint John the Baptist from Gospel materials, we find a similar use of the term *sensus*. Paulinus writes there that he hopes to imitate the psalmist-poet David and that therefore “it is right for us too to have remembered God and, although our heart is buried under many sins, to receive a heavenly apprehension (*nos quoque fas meminisse dei et quamquam obruta multis / pectora criminibus caelestem admittere sensum*)”.¹⁷ Being ready to “receive” appears to point to a more passive attitude than the imperative “conceive”, which implies some active participation in the process of apprehending by the subject.

Elsewhere in Paulinus’s writings, such an actively participative apprehension of invisible reality appears to take place through the affective, meditative beholding of a visible image. The ancient theory of vision was that a ray emitted from the eye ‘touched’ its object, was thereby impressed by its pattern, and transmitted this impression to the soul.¹⁸ Although not explicitly referred to, this view must have been taken for granted in what Paulinus writes about the effect of his gazing upon the face of his good friend Nicetas of Remesiana (*fl. ca. 400*), a missionary bishop, who had come to visit him for the celebration of saint Felix’s *dies natalis*. We see, however, that Paulinus – at least in his literary representation of the event – again has a process of fecundation in mind:

I shall look at him frequently with reverent eyes. From the face [and mouth, i.e. words?] of this wise man, perhaps, as once the unproductive cattle of the shepherd Jacob, I shall conceive fecund apprehensions in my barren heart. ... This is how grace gives new life to barren souls in the name of the Trinity and the Holy Spirit as husband impregnates through the intercourse of the Word ...

... *venerante frequenter
lumine conspiciam; forsán sapientis ab ore,
ut quondam effetae pecudes pastoris Iacob,
concipiam sterili fecundos pectore sensus... .
sic animas steriles in nomine gratia trino
innovat, et verbi coitu vir spiritus inplet ...*¹⁹

¹⁶ FONTAINE, *Naissance*, pp. 152, and pp. 143-160 respectively.

¹⁷ *Carm* 6, vv. 25-26, p. 8.

¹⁸ M. MILES, “Vision: The eye of the body and the eye of the mind in Saint Augustine’s *De trinitate* and *Confessiones*”, *The Journal of Religion* 63 (1983), pp. 127-128.

¹⁹ *Carm* 27, vv. 244-247, 258-259; *Gn* 40, 37 ff. I have analyzed this passage in DE NIE, “Paulinus”, pp. 21-24.

Just as the Church, he writes, through her (mental) gaze upon the symbols of Jacob's rods as representations of divine mysteries "drinks in the moist seed of the Word whereby her face is signed with eternal light (*bibit uvida verbi / semina et aeterni signatur lumine vultus*)",²⁰ Paulinus himself beholds – that is: envisions with his mind's eye – these rods (i.e. mysteries) in Nicetas's heart. He writes: "with fixed eyes, I drank in the colours I saw [there], and [Nicetas's] dew-laden heart sprinkled me with divine drops (*conspectumque bibi per lumina fixa colorem, / et me divinis sparsit mens roscida guttis*)".²¹ This is a crucial passage in Paulinus's view of the apprehension of invisible realities. The implicate concept of the spontaneous interior replication of an image (also when communicated through words) through its very beholding is conflated with the metaphor of impregnation by the Holy Spirit and the resulting conception. Envisioning and thereby internalizing the biblical image of a divine mystery, then, is simultaneously being impregnated with the 'seed' of the Holy Spirit, and this causes a "*fecundus sensus*" to be generated in the "barren heart" of the beholder. *Beholding the image of a divine mystery, then, precipitates its creation as a living reality in the heart.* This is the essence of the process which Paulinus is attempting to set in motion through his meditations and his writings.

This notion and the mention of the Church's face as "signed" with light, however, point to the resonance of a crucial but usually neglected passage in the letters of the apostle Paul. After having referred to Moses's shining face when he had just seen God on the mountain, the apostle writes about the believers' beholding/understanding Christ prefigured in the Old Testament text:

We too, perceiving-reflecting the glory of the Lord with an unveiled face, are transformed into that same image, from light to light, as though by the Spirit of the Lord.

*nos vero omnes revelata facie gloriam Domini speculantes in eandem imaginem transformamur a claritate in claritatem tamquam a Domini Spiritu.*²²

"Unveiled face" here means the seeing through the literal sense of the text to its deeper meaning, something which Paulinus too was constantly engaged in doing. *Speculantes*, however, implies reflecting an image (a *speculum* is a mirror) as well as perceiving one: a replication in the heart of the image seen. This passage appears to anticipate modern psychology's (re-)discovery of the spon-

²⁰ *Carm* 27, vv. 262-263.

²¹ *Ibid.*, vv. 271-272.

²² II Cor 3, 18.

taneous, involuntary affective mimesis of things seen, about which more will be said later.

The notion of mentally “conceiving”, in a quasi-sexual sense, a living divine pattern can be traced to the third-century Christian thinker Origen, the initiator of Christian allegorical interpretation and thus a proponent of images (rather than abstract concepts) as representations of higher truths. A number of his writings were translated into Latin in the period in which Paulinus was expanding his knowledge of the Bible. Possibly connected with the dissemination of these translations, the metaphor of a spiritual coitus was also a central theme in the fourth-century Christian ascetic literature with which Paulinus is likely to have been acquainted.²³ As one of the first writers in the west to practice allegorical interpretation, he may very well have arrived at his notion of “conceiving” a “*divinus sensus*” through impregnation by the Holy Spirit through these sources.

In the case of Jovius as well as of Nicetas, the attitude of the receiving subject looks like that of meditation, a practice then being taken up by the Christian ascetic elite.²⁴ In Paulinus’s literary advice to Jovius, however, it is said to lift up the mind to contemplate the dimension of the divine in heaven, where the Holy Spirit would precipitate the “conceiving” of “an apprehension of God”. Compared to conceiving merely “a fecund apprehension”, this is a pretty bold statement. Paulinus here appears to equate *poesis* – the inspired envisioning of poetic images representing invisible truths – with ‘conceiving’ images that reflect the divine itself. The “divine matters” to be meditated upon as stepping-stones toward this experience are later specified as the biblically revealed “true wonders of the highest God (*miracula summi vera dei*)”,²⁵ and these, of course, consist of visible as well as invisible events. If Jovius were to write about these, Paulinus tells him, he would pronounce him to be “a truly divine poet (*divinus*

²³ See on Origen and this theme in ascetic literature: G. DE NIE, “‘Consciousness fecund through God’: From male fighter to spiritual bride-mother in late antique female sanctity”, in: *Sanctity and Motherhood: Essays on Holy Mothers in the Middle Ages*, ed. A.B. MULDER-BAKKER (New York and London, 1995), pp. 101-161.

²⁴ A recent study elaborately describes, from a rhetorical point of view, the late antique and medieval techniques of meditation upon texts and accompanying illustrations as one of inventive visualization: M. CARRUTHERS, *The Craft of Thought: Meditation, Rhetoric, and the Making of Images, 400-1200* (Cambridge, 1998: *Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature* 34); the author states that such meditative reading tends to shade into visionary experience (pp. 184-188).

²⁵ *Carm* 22, vv. 29-30, p. 187.

vere poeta)".²⁶ By this time, Paulinus had already written his poetical version of John the Baptist's deeds: it must therefore have been his own aim as well.

"A Holier Kind of Perception"?

Peter Dronke's magisterial sketch of the fundamental change in the view of imagination in the first centuries AD²⁷ puts Paulinus's words about Christian poetic creation in perspective. Although, in his later *Dialogues*, Plato had spoken of this inspiration as a gift of supra-rational insights from above, he appears to have persisted in denying its product real cognitive value, insisting that images belonged to the sphere of imitation of the visible – that is, of a shadow reality – only.²⁸ Aristotle too had limited the poet's art to the visualization of the realm of senses. In his treatise on the Orator, however, Cicero (106-43 BC) had first spoken of a suprasensory ideal, like Plato's Idea, not as a concept but as an image: the *species* of perfect beauty would have inspired Phidias's sculptures.²⁹ Such an image belongs to the sphere of cognition, not fantasy: it is grasped by *cogitatio* and *mens*, and is contemplated and intuited (*contemplabatur, intuens*) by the spirit (*animus*).³⁰ Images in the mind, then, and not only abstract concepts, can now be regarded as representations capable of communicating a real, higher truth.

A few hundred years later, Flavius Philostratus (*fl. ca.* 200), in his life of the pagan saint Apollonius, contrasting the handiwork (*demiourgesei*) of artistic imitation (*mimesis*) of the visible with the creative mental fashioning carried out by the imagination, writes that the latter "creates what it does not see, since it will *conceive (hypothesetai)* it by reference to that which is (*ten anaphoran tou*

²⁶ *Ibid.*, v. 157, p. 193. Cf. P.G. VAN DER NAT, *Divinus vere poeta: Enige bechouwingen over ontstaan en karakter der christelijke latijnse poëzie* (Leiden, 1963).

²⁷ P. DRONKE, *Imagination in the Late Pagan and Early Christian World. The First Nine Centuries A.D.* (Florence, 2003: *Millennio Medievale* 42: *Strumenti e studi* n.s. 4), pp. 3-24. On the philosophical tradition in which Paulinus was embedded: H. CHADWICK, "Philosophical tradition and the Self", in: *Late Antiquity. A Guide to the Postclassical World*, ed. G.W. BOWERSOCK *et al.* (Cambridge, MA and London, 1999), pp. 60-81. Paulinus's philosophical-religious views as they emerge from his writings are analyzed in W. ERDT, *Christentum und heidnisch-antike Bildung bei Paulin von Nola, mit Kommentar und Übersetzung des 16. Briefes* (Meisenheim am Glan, 1976: *Beiträge zur klassischen Philologie* 82).

²⁸ FONTAINE, *Naissance*, p. 152, however, thinks that Paulinus's poetic theory resembles that in Plato's (427-347 BC) later *Dialogues* of an inspired and prophetic poetry that transcends reason. Cf. CONYBEARE, *Paulinus*, pp. 124-126.

²⁹ Cicero, *Orator* II, 8; cited in DRONKE, *Imagination*, p. 9.

³⁰ DRONKE, *Imagination*, p. 10.

ontos) [*italics added*]].³¹ Precisely *how* this bringing forth takes place is not indicated, but it is clearly meant to be something more creative than a mere copying. The *Life* was well-known in Paulinus's time; did its view of imagination influence Paulinus's choice of words? The third-century pagan philosopher Plotinus (ca. 205-270) also privileged images as representations of higher truths, saying that "the gods and the blessed do not contemplate propositions, but each of the forms [they contemplate] is a beautiful image ... these images are not painted but real".³² Thus even the spiritual archetypes of reality began to be thought of as images – a development that appears to point to a fundamental, albeit up to now relatively little-explored, change of orientation in this period.³³ As *reflections* of the divine realm, these images, Plotinus said, could be brought down into human souls and communicated by poets;³⁴ the idea may resonate in Paulinus's conception of the "divine poet". Finally, Paulinus's Syrian contemporary Synesius (ca. 370-412) posited that imagination establishes a unique kind of bond between the human and the divine worlds, and that it is "perhaps a holier kind of perception".³⁵ We shall see a similar view in what Paulinus writes about imaginative vision in the Christian context. In the development just sketched, then, we see that in the late fourth century the notion that higher or divine truth could be apprehended in the form of a mentally envisioned image-pattern had come to prevail.

"God's Great Laws"

Notwithstanding his textual and other-worldly orientation, however, Paulinus also looked for signs of divine activity in contemporary visible events,

³¹ *Hypothesetai gar auto pros ten anaphoran tou ontos – Life of Apollonius*, VI, 19, ed. W.C. WRIGHT, *Philostratus and Eunapius, Lives of the Sophists* (London and New York, 1922: Loeb Classical Library 728), p. 78, translated by DRONKE, *loc. cit.*

³² Plotinus, *Enneads* V, 8, 5, translated by DRONKE, *Imagination*, p. 12.

³³ A pioneer investigation into this is S.G. MACCORMACK, *Art and Ceremony in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, 1981: *The Transformation of the Classical Heritage* 1). The theme has been subtly explored in: P. COX MILLER, *Dreams in Late Antiquity: Studies in the Imagination of a Culture* (Princeton, 1994) and EAD., *The Poetry of Thought in Late Antiquity. Essays in imagination and religion* (Aldershot, 2001). J. ELSNER, *Art and the Roman Viewer* (Cambridge, 1995) documents the transition from naturalism to symbolic ritualism in art, and S. RAPPE, *Reading Neoplatonism: Non-discursive Thinking in the Texts of Plotinus, Proclus and Damascius* (Cambridge, 2000) brilliantly pinpoints a parallel development in contemporary philosophy.

³⁴ DRONKE, *Imagination*, p. 13.

³⁵ Synesius, *De insomniis*, cited without reference in DRONKE, *Imagination*, p. 14.

and this is especially evident in his poems about saint Felix's miracles. For him, if perhaps not for the philosophically inclined Jovius, they are among the wonders to be written about by the "truly divine poet". For, as he writes elsewhere,

where ... faith is sick among a faltering people, there it is certainly right that greater lights be kindled, and that through God's illumination dispersing the darkness of the world, dazed minds and dulled eyes are freed from their dark veil and anointed with the healing salve of Christ, and tremblingly reach out to those rays of divine truth.

*ubi ... aegra laborat
in populo titubante fides, ibi lumina prorsus
accendi maiora decet mundique tenebras
inlustrante deo perimi mentesque retusis
adtonitis oculis trepidasque intendere ad ipsos
divini veri radios, caligine taetra
solvere collyrioque medentis inungere Christi.*³⁶

As a manifestation and sign of an invisible heavenly dynamic working in the sensory world, a visible miracle, then, can lift the mind out of its everyday commonsensical habits by illuminating it with a "ray" that highlights the image-pattern of a non-sensory truth in the visible event. Thereby, Paulinus appears to be saying, it would precipitate in the beholder a sensing-envisioning of this truth that resembles the meditative-poetical conceiving of a "*divinus sensus*".³⁷ For, referring to what must be these, Paulinus writes to Jovius:

You, whose generous mind is aflame with the fire of the heavenly seed, ascend with your soul into the ethereal retreats and place your head on the Lord's bosom. Soon ... the generous Christ ... will bathe your mind in divine light, so that – the veil being dispelled – you may see the awesome God's great laws, through which the all-begetting Wisdom, Christ, whilst remaining within Himself, constantly renews all things.

³⁶ *Carm* 19, vv. 28-34, p. 119.

³⁷ In 418-419, Augustine was to express a similar view in his *Tractatus in Iohannis Evangelium* 17. 1, ed., tr. and comm. M.-F. BERROUARD (Paris, 1977: *Bibliothèque Augustinienne – Oeuvres de saint Augustin* 72), pp. 70-72: "*Sed quia ipsa anima non eum noverat a quo sananda erat et oculos habebat in carne under facta corporalia videret, nondum habebat sanis in corde unde Deum latentem cognosceret quod videre poterat ut sanaretur unde videre non poterat*".

*tu, cui mens generosa superni seminis igne
ardet, in aetheros animo conscende recessus
et gremio domini caput insere; mox ...
... largus ... Christus
divinoque tuam perfundet lumine mentem,
ut videas pulsa caligine magna tremendi
iura dei, quibus omniparens sapientia Christus
in sese ipse manens semper novat omnia rerum.*³⁸

The aim, then, is a philosophical-mystical envisioning of the “laws” or dynamic patterns of the divine mysteries.³⁹ As especially Paulinus’s letters show, for him the latter are those revealed through the patterns of biblical events, and the prophetic and poetic images in the biblical prophecies. In the above-quoted passage, Christ, known, of course, to be “the true Light that enlightens everyone coming into the world”,⁴⁰ is said to illumine the poet’s mind so that he can “see” through the opaqueness of sensory events and literal textual meanings to perceive – in fact: “conceive” – apprehensions of their informing divine image-patterns. As already indicated, Paulinus’s allegorical expositions are pioneering works, probably inspired by Ambrose and Jerome.⁴¹ The speculative manner in which his prose letters elucidate contemporary events and concerns by means of an often extensive and complicated web of associatively linked biblical images – a kind of poetic, rather than systematic, theology – is highly original.⁴²

Such divine “laws”, Paulinus asserts however, can never be seen with the physical eyes. For the visionary poet must

not be conquered by the empty things of the present world and must spurn what he sees, so that he may deserve what he does not see, penetrating the heavenly secrets with his flaming consciousness. For it is the transient that is exposed to our gaze, the eternal is denied to it, and we now follow in hope what we see with our minds, rejecting the various forms and appearances of the material world.

*... non vincant vacuis praesentia rebus,
quaeque videt spernat, quae non videt ut mereatur*

³⁸ *Carm* 22, vv. 79-86, p. 190.

³⁹ CARRUTHERS, *Craft*, pp. 187-188, states that in Gregory the Great’s late sixth-century *Dialogues* an image was considered simultaneously a figment of the imagination and a vision, in that it represented a true spiritual reality. Paulinus’s view appears to be close to this.

⁴⁰ *Io* 1, 9.

⁴¹ CARRUTHERS, *Craft*, pp. 116-170, analyzes how different writers did this.

⁴² See on this: CONYBEARE, *Paulinus*. COX MILLER, *The Poetry of Thought*, presents an insightful study of the allegorical tradition in late Antiquity.

*secreta ignitus penetrans caelestia sensus.
namque caduca patent nostris, aeterna negantur
visibus, et nunc spe sequimur, quod mente videmus
spernentes varias, rerum spectacula, formas ...*⁴³

Nevertheless, he believed that the symbols and representations of biblical notions and events which, as is well-known, he caused to be painted in his new churches at Nola, would "nourish" the viewers' minds – presumably by reminding them in one way or another of the invisible truths of faith they had heard or read about.⁴⁴

"Make Me Now Bring Forth a Harmonious Sound"

Turning now to the poem containing his most elaborately described miracle, let us (speculatively) visualize its delivery. On a wintry morning, the fourteenth of January, in the year 401,⁴⁵ a mixed crowd of country folk, clerics, monks, city-based aristocrats and perhaps a few visiting foreigners, is gathered in saint Felix's church. Amidst many fragrant oil lamps, coloured candles, white curtains and ivy garlands (mentioned as present in other birthday poems⁴⁶), Paulinus, shabbily dressed in a rough monk's cloak, walks to the lectern and begins to recite these words:

Spring releases the birds' voices, but my tongue has its own spring: the birthday of [Saint] Felix, who is the light through which the winter itself blossoms for the rejoicing people. Although the wintry season is in the midst of its frosts, continuing its sombre cold [and] contracting the year with its white-haired fields, these joys produced by that light, however, bring forth for us a happy spring. ... [a description of birds singing in spring foliage follows] Assent [to my request], Fountain of the word, Word God, make me now [bring forth] a harmonious sound with a sweet voice like that bird in the spring. ... Now it whirls around graceful melodies, now it whistles with a prolonged sound; then again, beginning what seems to be a

⁴³ *Carm* 10, vv. 171-175, pp. 31-32.

⁴⁴ *Carm* 27, vv. 514-515, p. 285. Cf. Vergilius, *Aeneid* 1, 464: "*animum pictura pascit inani*". On the decoration of Paulinus's churches see: H. JUNOD-AMMERBAUER, "Les constructions de Nole et l'esthétique de saint Paulin", *Revue des études augustinienes* 24 (1978), pp. 13-54, and R.C. GOLDSCHMIDT, *Paulinus' Churches at Nola: Texts, Translations and Commentary* (Amsterdam, 1940).

⁴⁵ This is the date given to the poem by WALSH, *Poems*, p. 6.

⁴⁶ As in *Carm* 18, vv. 30-39, p. 98.

mournful song, it suddenly cuts its lament short and beguiles our astonished ears with a fragmented melody. ...

I pray that, like that bird, it be granted to me to vary the melodies and each year bring forth the promised songs in varied language, be it from the same mouth. For bountiful grace keeps adding different subject matter through the wondrous deeds of power of the Lord, which God Christ grants in large numbers through our dear Felix, giving forth shining miracles through salvation-and-health-bringing signs.⁴⁷

*Ver avibus voces aperit, mea lingua suum ver
natalem Felicis habet, quo lumine et ipsa
florete hiems populis gaudentibus; et licet atro
frigore tempus adhuc mediis hiberna pruinis
ducat, concretum terris canentibus annum,
ista luce tamen nobis pia gaudia laetum
ver faciunt. ...
adnue, fons verbi, verbum deus, et velut illam
me modo veris avem dulci fac voce canorum
nunc teretes rotat illa modos, nunc sibila longis
ducit acuta sonis, rursum quasi flebile carmen
inchoat et subito praecidens fine querellam
adtonitas rupto modulamine decipit aures... .
et tamen illius mihi deprecor alitis instar
donetur variare modis et pacta quotannis
carmina mutatis uno licet ore loquellis
promere, diversas quia semper gratia dives
materias miris domini virtutibus addit,
quas deus in caro Christus Felice frequentat,
clara salutifera edens miracula signis.*

In this prologue, we see more specifics of Paulinus's view of the origin and nature of Christian *poetic language* about the invisible divine. The classical tradition of invitation to delight through the suggestion of natural beauty is here spiritualized: a spiritual spring is imaginatively produced in a wintry landscape by what is referred to as the "light" of Felix. Deriving largely from the Gospel of John's quoting Christ as saying that he is "the Light of the world", light symbolism permeated Christian religiosity in this period.⁴⁸ As we shall see later in the poem, Felix, being totally transparent to Christ, is thought to transmit this

⁴⁷ *Carm* 23, vv. 1-7, 27-28, 33-36, 38-44, pp. 194-195.

⁴⁸ Io 8, 12; 9, 5. See, for instance: G. SANDERS, *Licht en duisternis in de christelijke grafschriften*, 2 vols. (Brussel, 1965: *Verhandelingen van de Koninklijke Vlaamse Academie voor Wetenschappen, Letteren en Schone Kunsten van België*, Klasse der Letteren 27, 56).

light: various modes of it are central in the miracle that is there described. Whereas in this introduction an image of a spiritual event in the heart transforms that of an opposite sensorial landscape, it is there conceived of as analogous to, and as it were continuous with, the sensory event – revealing two different strategies of imagining the invisible in the visible.

As a now Christian poet, Paulinus continues the classical tradition of calling upon a source of inspiration, but he replaces the traditional Muses and their Castalian fountain with Christ as the Word of God⁴⁹ and what may have been understood (by the well-educated) to be his "spring welling up into eternal life",⁵⁰ and the impregnating image of the Holy Spirit is also associatively evoked. The poet appears to think of Christ's inspiration as the direct gift of beautiful language and does not think it inappropriate to ask (as one would have asked the Muses) for one that is as melodious and variegated as the song of the nightingale – perhaps hoping that the listener, now remembering having once heard that song, will thereby open his heart to expect a similarly captivating melody. Conditioned by the contemporary preference for extensively decorated language,⁵¹ Paulinus must have assumed that the unadorned message alone would not be aesthetically acceptable to his educated contemporaries. It is tempting to see in this passage, at first sight disproportionately long, a prefiguration, not only of a pattern of beautiful poetry awakening the heart, but – obliquely, if you will – also of what he is intending to describe in the miracle story later in the poem: Christ and the saint's invisible grace or dynamic pattern, awakening and empowering his courier Theridius's heart, hand and eye. Since the latter is shown living and worshipping with Paulinus's monastic community during his stay there, it cannot be coincidental that this miracle is described in a manner that would appeal especially to their biblical knowledge and meditative spiritual concerns rather than (as the other stories) to the more practical ones of the country folk. As we shall see, it may even be read as making the aforementioned "ray of divine truth" as it were almost visible.

"The Ancient Enemy"

After Paulinus's request to Christ for a variegated song like the nightingale, however, there follows – at first sight, somewhat incongruously – a detailed and

⁴⁹ Io 1, 1.

⁵⁰ Io 4, 14.

⁵¹ See on this: M. ROBERTS, *The Jeweled Style: Poetry and Poetics in Late Antiquity* (Ithaca, 1989).

perhaps somewhat tongue-in-cheek description of the saint's punishment of demons and their chief, "the ancient Enemy (*vetus hostis*)" or Devil, in the possessed who had come to be healed at the shrine. One man, for instance, is said to have hung upside down on the railing around the saint's tomb without his clothes falling down.⁵² Although the sick are said to have been healed too, there is no description here of any specific cure – nor is there a really detailed description of a cure in any other *Natalicium*. As we shall see in Gregory's stories, illnesses can be messy and Paulinus appears to have been a fastidious man. When he proceeds, after this, to relate the miracle that occurred in his monastery, however, the Devil's active but invisible presence there too is repeatedly and emphatically hinted at, and this is likely to be the reason that the more visible indications of his activity are enlarged upon earlier in the poem.

"Manifest Evidence That the Hidden God is Present"

Paulinus then introduces Theridius's story by addressing the listener:

Listen, I pray, to some new, if small, deeds of our patron, which our Lord Christ performed through him by many kinds of power, and through which He works to strengthen one faith in us: so that we may see through manifest evidence that the hidden God is present, and the heavenly Lord tending to the matters and minds of men with fatherly care through that Word by means of which He created everything.

*auscultate, precor, dominus quae Christus in illo
multimoda virtute gerit, quibus omnibus unam
confirmare fidem nobis studet, ut per aperta
arcanum documenta deum videamus adesse
resque hominum et mentes studio curare paterno
caelestem dominum quo condidit omnia verbo.*⁵³

The listener-reader, then, is alerted to look for and discern the divine presence and care in the visible event. As will become evident, to do this fully would also have required something like a meditative kind of receptiveness to the as-

⁵² *Carm* 23, vv. 85-92, p. 197. This incident, however, resembles one in Sulpicius Severus's description of saint Martin's exorcisms (*Dialogi* 2 (3), 6, 4; ed. C HALM (Vienna, 1866: *CSEL* 1), p. 204), as well as one in Jerome's *Epistola* 108, 13 (reference in: C. STANCLIFFE, *Saint Martin and His Hagiographer: History and Miracle in Sulpicius Severus* (Oxford, 1983), p. 369).

⁵³ *Carm* 23, vv. 100-105, pp. 197-198.

sociative echoes in the poem's imagery. Paulinus begins the story by relating that on a certain evening Theridius left the room, full of the smoke of wax tapers, in which the monks were singing the evening hymns, to get a breath of fresh air. Advancing confidently in a narrow unlighted corridor in what Paulinus suggestively calls the "blind night (*nocte ... caeca*)", ⁵⁴ he unwittingly approached the spot above which a glass oil lantern usually hung, attached by its three hooks onto metal sections at the end of a cord. At this dramatic moment, perhaps as a meditational *point d'orgue* but no doubt also to keep his hearers in suspense, Paulinus inserts a very long and circumstantial description – an *ekphrasis* – of the lamp itself: the white water at the bottom, the yellow oil on top, the tow wick in the middle. Its images make the object, an evident symbol of what is about to happen to Theridius, come alive.⁵⁵ Because the flame had gone out for lack of fuel during the vigils, however, it had been removed by one of the servants. This man, unfortunately, had forgotten to pull up the cord again and tie it up with a knot – leaving it hanging low, "bereft of its illumination and full of blind danger. For armed with the teeth of its menacing hooks it formed a most dreadful snare, and with these now evilly confronted our brother (*gratiae lucis inops et caeci plena pericli / nam laquei summum dentata minantibus uncis / armabatur, et his male tunc fuit obvia fratri*)".⁵⁶

Paulinus's phrasing suggests, first, that the lamp is a symbol for the eye (whose roughly similar physical make-up he later describes in a pause at another crucial moment⁵⁷), and second, that the Devil is hidden but actively present in the darkness and waiting to capture Theridius's eye in the swaying hooked cord. The larger notion of the Devil's "capturing" human souls and minds – for instance, in the possessed – resonates here. Christ, however, Paulinus continues, converted this "beastly accident (*feralem ... casum*)"⁵⁸ – another pointer to the nature of the Devil – into a cause of joy for us: "observe the hand of Christ [in this] (*videte manum Christi*)".⁵⁹ As will become evident in what follows, this specific image is a *cue* for the listener/reader, priming him to envision and recognize the image Paulinus will present as the dynamic pattern of the miracle about to occur.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, v. 121, p. 198.

⁵⁵ Cf. CARRUTHERS, *Craft*, p. 155: "textual *ekphrases* were [...] sites for further meditational composition".

⁵⁶ *Carm* 23, vv. 155-157, p. 199.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, vv. 174-183, p. 200.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, v. 159, p. 200.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, v. 160, p. 200.

As Theridius advanced in the darkness, one of the hooks on the cord swaying at the level of his head struck his eye and inserted itself inside the eyelid. Crying out and afraid to lose his eyeball, he clapped his hand over his eye and stood there, terrified, with his head thrown back, not knowing what to do. It is at this moment that Paulinus inserts the description of the eye as it should be – perhaps another meditational *point d'orgue* and prolonging the suspense again. In contrast to what we shall later see Gregory doing, all these literary strategies, it should be noticed, reinforce the experience of this story as a *text to be imagined around* rather than as a sensory event happening before one's eyes.

Then Paulinus continues the story: “despairing of a remedy through human effort, [Theridius] prayed to Felix, who then arrived through God's aid (*sed desperante medellam / ex ope mortali divina mox ope Felix / inploratus adest*)”.⁶⁰ An improbably long and rhetorically patterned verbal supplication – invented, of course, by Paulinus – now follows, inviting the listener as it were to immerse himself in it so as to re-enact the experience, but also functioning as a lesson in correct prayer to the saint. Theridius begins by deploring what must be his great sins deserving this affliction, in spite of being Felix's client and neighbour, and on his very birthday, and then asks for help:

Holy man, I implore you, rescue your own! I know that you are near, and that from the adjoining building you have directed your ears to this place and heard, o Felix, the plaint of your miserable foster child. Or, if you now reside as confessor and friend close to the side of the Great King and before His throne in heaven, carry these words of your poor [suppliant] through the clouds to the ears of God. ...

Hasten, I pray, and place your holy hands against my eye that threatens to fall from its socket. Pull out the iron which you see implanted there, which I do not dare to draw out with my own hand, lest I deprive myself of eye-light in attempting to rid myself of the javelin. ...

You alone, Hand of God, which created our eyes themselves in us, gave [Felix] the healing power, with which [he] tortures and overcomes dark demons, with which [he] expels all pain from sick bodies through the lofty name of Christ, powerful through the almighty Lord: [o Felix,] now undertake to heal me under His guidance.

*sancte, precor, succurre tuo; scio, proximus adstas
et de contigua missis huc auribus aede
audisti, Felix, fletum infelicis alumni;
sive modo excelso lateri coniunctus adhaeres*

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, vv. 197-199, p. 201.

*ante thronum magni regis confessor amicus,
pauperis hanc, venerande, tui trans nubila vocem
accipis aure dei ...
curre, precor, sanctasque manus oppone minanti
lapsum oculo et fixum quod conspicias erue ferrum,
quod propria revocare manu non audeo, ne me
lumine despoliem, dum conor solvere telo.
tu tantum, divina manus, quae condidit ipsos
in nobis oculos, quae te quoque dextra potentem
sanifera virtute dedit, qua demonas atros
excruciando domas, qua corporis omne caduci,
pellere tormentum potes alto nomine Christi,
omnipotente potens domino; quo praesule nunc me
suscipe sanandum.⁶¹*

The earlier description of the demons' punishment, then, now serves to prove the saint's power to overcome the invisible Enemy also here, in the dark corridor. Theridius thereupon proceeds to remind Felix of everything he has sacrificed and left behind in order to dedicate himself to him as his patron, and to pressure the saint, saying: "I threw myself upon your sole companionship; now demonstrate [your patronage] by helping me in this", and do it "to enhance the Lord's praise"⁶² – things which the saint could hardly refuse.

"The Hand of God"

While the naive (*simplex*) man was praying such things, Paulinus continues (we notice an authorial distancing here), "behold, the helping hand of the holy Felix was at once present, and with his breath he silently strengthened the hesitating mind and hand [of Theridius], so that he was not afraid to extract the metal safely (*manus ecce beati / prospera mox Felicis adest dubiamque timentis / adspirans tacite firmat mentemque manumque, / ne timeat tuto ausurus producere ferrum*)".⁶³ No wound resulted, only a rush of tears, and

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, vv. 206-212, 216-219, 222-228, pp. 201-202. The last part of the passage is somewhat obscurely worded.

⁶² *Ibid.*, vv. 247, 249-250, p. 203.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, vv. 255-258, p. 203.

his eye, purged of such an immense, dark danger, shone with the same pure light [or: as such a bright mirror] as now, all healed, it is seen: shining with the gift of the eternal Christ.

*mox oculus tanti purgatus nocte pericli
tam puro enituit speculo, quam nunc quoque sanus
cernitur aeterni conlucens munere Christi.*⁶⁴

This image becomes understandable when one remembers that, as we have seen, eyes were then thought to *emit* light.⁶⁵ The gift of Theridius's ray of eye-light, then, can be imaginatively understood to make not only Christ's light, but also this miracle's "ray of divine truth", as it were visible. What had happened, Paulinus explains, was that "the Hand of God (*divina ... manus*)" had prevented a wound by making the point of the metal harmless and its weight light.⁶⁶

This elicits a surge of praise of this 'Hand' that heals without hurt: what could it be other than

the Hand that made all things? It was the Spirit of God that everywhere enters into all the elements of things, finer than any gossamer, ... that made the man born blind have new eyes ... through the creative art with which He made the whole world; it was the Son of God, the Hand and the Wisdom of the Father, the all-begetting Source and Sustainer of things: Christ.

*quae manus omnia fecit?
spiritus ille dei penetrator ubique per omnes
naturas rerum, tenui subtilior omni,
... qua totum perficit orbem,
filius ille dei, manus et sapientia patris,
omniparens rerum fons et constantia, Christus.*⁶⁷

Paulinus has here transformed the Old Testament image of "the hand of the Lord (*manus Domini*)"⁶⁸ into a symbol of Christ – and also associatively evokes the palpable hand of the incarnated Christ in his reference to the cure of the man

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, vv. 262-264, p. 203.

⁶⁵ MILES, "Vision", pp. 125-142.

⁶⁶ *Carm* 23, vv. 274-275, p. 204.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, vv. 289-291, 296-297, pp. 204-205.

⁶⁸ Nm 11, 23 and *passim*. It appears in the Old Testament mosaics in the mid-sixth-century church of S. Vitale in Ravenna.

born blind, an event that represents the enlightenment of the whole human race.⁶⁹

Thereupon, Paulinus praises "the Creator himself, God our Light", who – not needing to adorn his martyr more than he had already done – "wished to bestow upon us a special joy at this time", by giving a sign (*signum*) that would teach the heavenly Felix's "foster children"⁷⁰ (presumably, he means his community)

to live through His merit and care, by which, as our guardian, He preserves our safety and always protects our limbs as well as our minds against the attacking Enemy in the dangers of the night.⁷¹ ...

Rightly, I hold this man [Theridius] as dear as my own eyes, for in his eye(light) the hand of Felix, my glory in Christ, shines. O happy accident, goodly wound, sweet danger, through which I have come to know that the martyr cares for me! So great a thing was it for me to nearly lose that light in order that I might now have light through Felix's gift.

*merito illius curaue doceret
vivere, quo nostram servans custode salutem
saepius infestum nocturnis casibus hostem
a nostris pariter membris et mentibus arcet. ...
iure oculis hunc aequo meis, in lumine cuius
Felicis manus in Christo, mea gloria, fulget.
o felix casus, bona vulnera, dulce periculum,
per quod cognovi me curam martyris esse,
tanti namque fuit lumen mihi paene perisse,
ut modo Felicis de munere lumen haberem.*⁷²

These words betray Paulinus's intense emotional dependence upon his image of the caring, protecting saint which is evident throughout the *Natalicia* (but, interestingly, not in his extant letters), as well as what looks like a certain unreflective egocentrism. It may be, however, that, despite Paulinus's many attributions of events to Felix, this was the closest that he himself ever came to observing a concrete, demonstrable miracle of the saint; and since Theridius belonged to his company, Paulinus could regard it as meant for him.

⁶⁹ Io 9, 1; other cures by Jesus's hand: Mt 8, 3, 15; 9, 25; Mc 1, 31, 41; 5, 41; 6,2: "*et virtutes tales quae per manus eius efficiuntur*"; etc.

⁷⁰ *Carm* 23, vv. 309, 317-320, p. 205.

⁷¹ Ps 19, 6.

⁷² *Carm* 23, vv. 321-324, 330-335, pp. 205-206.

But there is also a second level of meaning: that of Paulinus's inner illumination through this miracle. For how should we understand Felix's hand to be shining in Theridius's eye-light? Not visualizable here without incongruity, it must represent what Paulinus had designated as the Creator Christ's "finer-than-gossamer", invisible dynamic pattern of mental and physical empowerment, which has just been carried out by means of Theridius's own visible hand. What we see Paulinus here actually presenting, and even explaining, is his envisioning of an abstract divine pattern or law: this image of a "hand" is in fact the "*divinus sensus*", the apprehension of God through a symbol, which he conceived through observing – and thus, as he subsequently says, being "illuminated" by – the visible miracle.

For the last two lines, although obscurely worded (perhaps because of the constraints of poetic metre), point to the other main image – or "*divinus sensus*" – in Paulinus's presentation of this miracle. It appears to indicate that, through his performatively re-enacting Theridius's regaining of his eyesight, Paulinus experienced an analogous illumination in his mind through the event's "ray of divine truth". And that he intended the meditative listening or reading of his poem to induce a similar experience of illumination in the listener or reader. The idea, connected with the already-mentioned theory of vision, that one becomes what one sees was an ancient one, occurring in Plato and the Church Fathers.⁷³ Karl Morrison's studies of literary reception in the west have eloquently shown this process happening.⁷⁴ And modern psychological studies of the effects of meditation and affective imagery have also shown that *not only the mind but also the body spontaneously tends to mimic and replicate a pattern that is affectively absorbed through beholding its expression in a visible image, mental or pictorial*.⁷⁵ Properly and actively apprehended, then, Paulinus's poetic presentation of this miracle of restored eyesight could also precipitate the listener's interior divine illumination in "conceiving" and thereby envisioning the "*divinus sensus*" of the invisible Hand of God in this visible miracle.

⁷³ R. JAVELET, *Image et ressemblance au douzième siècle: De Saint Anselme à Alain de Lille*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1967), 1, pp. 8, 31, 37.

⁷⁴ K. MORRISON, "I am you": *The Hermeneutics of Empathy in Western Literature, Theology and Art* (Princeton, 1988); ID., *History as a Visual Art in the Twelfth-Century Renaissance* (Princeton, 1990).

⁷⁵ R. ASSAGIOLI, *Psychosynthesis* (New York, 1965), pp. 214-215. On clinical studies of meditation see: A.J. DEIKMAN, "Experimental meditation", in: *Altered States of Consciousness*, ed. Ch.T. TART (New York and London, 1969), pp. 199-218, and W. KRETSCHMER, "Meditative techniques in psychotherapy", *ibid.*, pp. 219-228.

"The Face of Truth"

But there may be still another dimension. In a prose letter to the same Jovius mentioned earlier, and written in the same period as the poem about Theridius, Paulinus writes:

When you direct your mind's eye toward the heavenly sanctuary, Truth will reveal her face to you and this will disclose to you your own self; for it is through the knowing of divine truth that we also come to know ourselves.

*ilico ut ad superna penetralia aciem mentis intenderis, aperiet ad te faciem suam veritas teque ipsum reserabit tibi. nam divinae veritatis agnitu, id quoque, ut nosmet ipsos noverimus, adsequimur.*⁷⁶

What Paulinus appears to be saying is that an image such as the hand of God, for instance, is one that *reveals not only a divine dynamic pattern in the visible and invisible world, but also a dynamically analogous, non-visual, non-verbal affective pattern at work in the mind and heart*. Perhaps this is why the heart is able recognize it at all. Something like an image that can be seen, then, represents, and makes inspectable and available for remembering and thought, an invisible, interior affective pattern of awareness. Modern psychology and philosophy, too, tell us that "an image is a concretization of emotion"⁷⁷ or, as I prefer to formulate it, of the dynamic pattern of an awareness or feeling – just as a passage of music is an aural rendering of such a pattern. More than a decade after this poem, Augustine wrote a major work on recognizing the dynamic image of the holy Trinity not only in the text of the Bible but also in the human heart and mind.⁷⁸ We shall see below that in our times a theoretical physicist and a biblical scholar, each in his own modern way, tends to agree with this profound insight.

⁷⁶ *Epistolae* (hereafter *Epp*) 16, 9, ed. G. DE HARTEL, ed. alt. suppl. aucta cur. M. KAMPTNER (Vienna, 1999: CSEL 29), p. 123. Cf. ERDT, *Christentum*, pp. 218-222.

⁷⁷ G. EPSTEIN, *Waking Dream Therapy* (New York and London, 1981), p. 18; S.K. LANGER, *Feeling and Form* (New York, 1953), p. 59 and *passim*; G. BACHELARD, *L'air et les songes: Essai sur l'imagination du mouvement* (Paris, 1943), pp. 10-13. On this view in the late antique period: M.R. MILES, *Image as Insight: Visual Understanding in Western Christianity and Secular Culture* (Boston, 1985), pp. 30, 44-45, 149.

⁷⁸ Cf. Augustinus Hipponensis, *De Trinitate*, 14, 4. 6, ed., tr. and comm. P. AGAËSSE and J. MOINGT (Paris, 1997: *Bibliothèque Augustinienne – Oeuvres de saint Augustin* 16), p. 356: "ea est invenienda in anima hominis, id est rationali, sive intellectuali, imago Creatoris, quae immortaliter immortalitati eius est insita".

In the poem about Theridius, then, Paulinus has achieved something close to the “divine poetry” that he himself must also have aimed at. His descriptions and images make the landscape and the events transparent to the workings of the invisible realities that are central in the Bible. When listened to in a meditative mode, these images would have been mentally reproduced and thereby affectively replicated. The listener would thus achieve an experiential apprehension of something like a reflection of one of the divine dynamic powers and patterns underlying, creating and sustaining the visible world. But, as we saw, he would recognize a similar pattern in himself as well. Paulinus, then, regards the images of divine laws being “conceived” in his mind – as “apprehensions of God” – through seeing a miracle, as well as during poetic meditation upon divine “wonders”, as also representing and revealing those of one’s own deepest and most elusive inner stirrings.⁷⁹ Envisioning the invisible divine in a miracle, then, also reveals the interior image of God in man pointed to in the creation story.⁸⁰

2. Gregory: “The Bare Story”

About 170 years later, the world and miracles looked very different. Bishop Gregory of Tours,⁸¹ lived in a spottily Christianized central Gaul in which Roman government and public higher education had crumbled, and which was now insecurely ruled by warring Frankish kings and their followers in often far from harmonious cooperation with the bishops. He had not been educated in a university, as Paulinus had, in grammar and the Latin literary classics, but in a bishop’s household, on the Psalms, the Gospels and the apostolic letters,⁸² only later reading what may have been excerpts of classical authors on his own. Strikingly independent of the baroque rhetoric then still found in contemporary poetry and epistles, Gregory is the first major Latin author to write all his works

⁷⁹ Cf. Gregorius Magnus, *Moralia* 2, 1, 1, ed. R. GILLET and A. DE GAUDEMARIS, 3rd edn. (Paris, 1989: SC 32 bis), p. 252: “*Scriptura sacra mentis oculis quasi quoddam speculum opponitur, ut interna nostra facies in ipsa videatur*”. Cited and discussed in CARRUTHERS, *Craft*, pp. 159-160.

⁸⁰ Cf. Gn 1, 27: “*et creavit Deus hominem ad imaginem suam, ad imaginem Dei creavit illum*”.

⁸¹ For a full and detailed account of his life and deeds, see: L. PIETRI, *La ville de Tours du IV^e au VI^e siècle: Naissance d’une cité chrétienne* (Rome, 1983), pp. 246-334.

⁸² Gregorius Turonensis, *Vita patrum* [hereafter VP] 2, prol., ed. B. KRUSCH, *Gregorii Turonensis Opera* 2: *Miracula et opera minora* (Hannover, 1885: MGH SRM 1.2), p. 668.

in a style and grammar that was relatively close to the spoken language and could be understood by everyone.⁸³

"Mak[ing] Barren Minds Conceive and Bring Forth Knowledge of Perfect Faith"

We may imagine him one evening, after a busy day of administrative and perhaps diplomatic as well as religious duties, sitting in his study lighted by oil lamps, and dictating or writing the prologue to his first collection of miracle stories:

... it behooves us to pursue, write and speak those things which will edify the Church, and which, by holy instruction, make barren minds conceive and bring forth the knowledge of perfect faith. ... Therefore ... I ... will not commemorate ... the ... fabricated fables which [Vergil] either fashioned through lying or pictured with heroic verse. But seeing that all these are as it were built upon sand and about to be destroyed [in the approaching end of the world], let us rather return to God's miracles in the Gospels.

Wherefore John the Evangelist began [his Gospel] by saying: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and God was the Word. This [Word] was in the beginning with God [*sic*]. Everything was made through Him, and without Him nothing was made". And thereafter he says: "And the Word was made flesh, and lived among us; and we saw His glory" ...⁸⁴ ... And He is also the salvation of the world ...

haec nos oportet sequi, scribere atque loqui, quae ecclesiam Dei aedificent et quae mentes inopes ad notitiam perfectae fidei instructione sancta fecundent. ... Non enim ... ego ... commemoro ... fabularum commenta, quae hic auctor [Vergilius] aut finxit mendacio aut versu depinxit heroico. Sed ista omnia tamquam super harenam locata et cito ruitura conspiciens, ad divina et evangelica potius miracula revertamur.

Unde Johannis evangelista exorsus est, dicens: "In principio erat Verbum, et Verbum erat apud Deum, et Deus erat Verbum. Hoc erat in principio apud Deum.

⁸³ See on Gregory's presentation: E. AUERBACH, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, tr. W. TRASK (Garden City, NY, 1957), pp. 67-83; H. BEUMANN, "Gregor von Tours und der *sermo rusticus*", in: ID., *Wissenschaft vom Mittelalter: Ausgewählte Aufsätze* (Köln and Wien, 1972), pp. 41-70; on Gregory's writing as representing the declining culture of the period: I. WOOD, *The Merovingian Kingdoms 450-751* (London and New York, 1994), pp. 28-32.

⁸⁴ Io 1, 1-3, 14.

*Omnia per ipsum facta sunt, et sine ipso factum est nihil". Et deinceps ait: "Et Verbum caro factum est et habitavit in nobis, et vidimus gloriam eius". ... Ipse est et salus mundi ...*⁸⁵

In this prologue to his *Miracles of the Martyrs* – considering its content, almost certainly intended for educated clerical readers – Gregory too rejects ancient literary fictions as useless and appears to be speaking, like Paulinus, of something like a conceiving of divine truth in the human mind through reading or hearing about miracles⁸⁶ – albeit not very clearly. For we see him leaping, as though from image to image in a poem: from this conceiving/bringing forth of the knowledge of faith – that is: of divine Truth – through stories about Gospel miracles on the one hand, to Christ, as the Word, being the Creator and seeing his glory as the embodied salvation of the world on the other, without making explicit the precise connection between them which appears to be indicated by the word *unde*: wherefore. It is a habit, more often visible in his writings, that for centuries earned him the – as I shall argue: undeserved – reputation of being confused.⁸⁷ As will be shown, however, the associational rather than discursive wording of this passage also points to a dreamlike or imagistic – if you will, poetic – mode of awareness which Gregory habitually adopted in the presence of, and when dealing with, the sacred.⁸⁸

The miracle stories that follow, intended for a broad audience, are presented in a very different fashion. Besides the Gospel miracles, another pioneer work influenced Gregory's presentation of these: the spiritual biography, *The life of saint Martin*, written in 396 by Paulinus's good friend and correspondent Sulpicius Severus,⁸⁹ also a monastic convert, and sent to him in that year.⁹⁰ Al-

⁸⁵ Gregorius Turonensis, *In gloria martyrum* [hereafter GM], *prologus*, ed. KRUSCH, *Gregorii Turonensis Opera* 2, pp. 487-488. I have given the editor's rendering of Gregory's (or his copyist's) Latin spelling. The biblical quotes appear to be from memory; they are translated as Gregory wrote them.

⁸⁶ Cf. G. STRUNK, *Kunst und Glaube in der lateinischen Heiligenlegende: Zu ihrem Selbstverständnis in den Prologen* (München, 1970: *Medium Aevum* 12), pp. 26-31.

⁸⁷ For an overview of the scholarly opinions on Gregory's writings see: G. DE NIE, *Views from a Many-Windowed Tower: Studies of Imagination in the Works of Gregory of Tours* (Amsterdam, 1987: *Studies in Classical Antiquity* 7), pp. 8-22.

⁸⁸ See on this with respect to reading religious texts: G. DE NIE, "The 'power' of what is said in the book: Word, script and sign in Gregory of Tours", in: G. DE NIE, *Word, Image and Experience: Dynamics of Miracle and Self-Perception in Sixth-Century Gaul* (Aldershot, 2003: *Variorum Collected Studies Series* 771), xv.

⁸⁹ Sulpicius Severus, *Vita sancti Martini* [hereafter VsM], ed., tr. and comm. J. FONTAINE, 3 vols. (Paris, 1967-1969: sc 133-135).

⁹⁰ TROUT, *Paulinus*, p. 127.

though Severus had been educated in the same academic and classical tradition as Paulinus, he chose to present the miracles and life of his admired saintly visionary not in poetry or highly decorated literary prose, but in simple (albeit impeccably worded) stories, resembling those in the Gospels and in the then appearing Lives of more or less contemporary Desert Fathers.⁹¹ Much of subsequent western hagiography continued this "humble" mode of expression.⁹² Severus's *Life* is highly interesting because of its proximity to Paulinus, whom it appears to have inspired to compose his (very different) poetic biography of Felix in the *Natalicia* of the subsequent years.⁹³ I have elected, however, to focus upon Gregory's later presentation and development of this kind of literary tradition because his material is much more copious and detailed. But also because his stories appear to show that Martin's religious mentality, that is, his frequent clairvoyance and visions – which were, as Severus indicates, disbelieved and ridiculed by his late fourth-century episcopal colleagues⁹⁴ – had by the late sixth century become something like generally recognized and sought-after experiences in the Church of Gaul.⁹⁵

Compared with Paulinus's asking Christ first of all for beautiful language, Gregory's primary concern with making a barren mind conceive and bring forth a knowledge of perfect faith, and somehow connecting this with Christ's being the divine Word and Creator is an unmistakable shift of emphasis. His models, as already indicated, were the dramatic but unclassically worded stories in the Bible – not, as with Paulinus, Vergil's elegant descriptions. How can hearing these simply-worded stories produce knowledge of divine truth? Here Gregory must have assumed that his clerical readers would be acquainted with the

⁹¹ See STANCLIFFE, *St Martin*, pp. 61-70.

⁹² An analysis of this *sermo humilis* in: E. AUERBACH, *Literary Language and Its Public in Late Latin Antiquity and in the Middle Ages*, tr. R. MANHEIM (Princeton, 1965: *Bollingen Series* 74), pp. 25-66.

⁹³ A comparison of Severus's and Paulinus's descriptions of miracle is given by J. DOIGNON, "Un récit de miracle dans les 'Carmina' de Paulin de Nole: Poétique virgilienne et leçon apologetique", *Revue d'Histoire de la Spiritualité* 48 (1972), pp. 129-144. By contrast, R.P.H. GREEN, "Paulinus of Nola and the diction of Latin poetry", *Latomus* 32 (1973), pp. 79-85, asserts that Paulinus combined "classical form and *sermo humilis*" according to the needs of the recipients (p. 85).

⁹⁴ As of for instance in VsM 9 and 26, 5-27, 7, resp. pp. 270-272, 314-316.

⁹⁵ I have compared Sulpicius Severus's presentation of one particular miracle of saint Martin with its 'translations' and imitations in the writings of the poet Paulinus of Périgueux in the fifth century and of the poet Venantius Fortunatus and Gregory of Tours in the sixth in: G. DE NIE, "Configurations of miracle: From Roman to Merovingian Gaul", to appear in: *Miracles and the Miraculous in Medieval Germanic and Latin Literature*, ed. K.E. OLSEN, A. HARBUS and T. HOFSTRA (Groningen, 2005: *Germania Latina*).

apostle Paul's saying that "faith [comes forth] out of hearing (*fides ex auditu*)".⁹⁶ But how, in his view, can the heard words about what must be Christ's continuing miracles of salvation bring forth something out of nothing in the heart? And what could be the more precise role of the Word as God and Creator in this?

Elsewhere, I have investigated the many-faceted cluster of associative implications and ramifications of Gregory's prologue.⁹⁷ The central images and concepts are the following. In adducing John's statements about the divine Word, it appears, Gregory may have been thinking of a certain passage in the letters of the apostle Paul – to whom he elsewhere, significantly, refers as "he in whom Christ himself, as he says, spoke".⁹⁸ And he must have assumed this association to occur naturally to the clerical readers of this prologue. For in I Th 2,13, Paul writes:

... when you received from us the word of God which you heard, you received it not as the word of men, but as what it really is: the Word of God that works in you who have come to believe.

... *quoniam cum accepistis a nobis verbum auditus Dei, accepistis non ut verbum hominum, sed sicut est vere, verbum Dei, qui operatur in vobis qui credidistis.*

Augustine (whom Gregory, somewhat surprisingly, nowhere mentions in his writings) had put forward a similar view in his commentary on John's Gospel,⁹⁹ and Gregory's elliptic formulation here may be read as taking some knowledge of this text for granted. Marcia Colish speaks of Augustine's view of Christian rhetoric as "incarnational": it embodies Christ as the Word and carries him into the listeners' hearts.¹⁰⁰ An image that makes this astonishing event visible is the

⁹⁶ Rm 10, 17.

⁹⁷ G. DE NIE, "The language in miracle – the miracle in language: Words and the Word according to Gregory of Tours", in: EAD., *Word, Image and Experience*, XVII.

⁹⁸ Cf. II Cor 13, 3. Gregorius Turonensis, *Historiae* [hereafter *Hist*] 10, 13, ed. B. KRUSCH and W. LEVISON, *Gregorii Turonensis Opera*, 1, *Libri historiarum X* (Hannover, 1937-1951: MGH SRM 1.1), p. 498.

⁹⁹ *Tractatus in Iohannis Evangelium*, 1, 8, ed. R. WILLEMS, *Sancti Aurelii Augustini in Iohannis Evangelium Tractatus CXXIV* (Turnhout, 1954: CCSL 36), pp. 142-146. It was written in 418-419. Augustine's treatise on Christian rhetoric, *De doctrina Christiana*, was begun in 396 but finished only in 427 (P. BROWN, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography* (London and Boston, 1967), p. 264; a discussion of this work in its context: pp. 259-269).

¹⁰⁰ M. COLISH, *The Mirror of Language: A Study of the Medieval Theory of Knowledge*, rev. ed. (Lincoln, Neb., and London, 1983), p. 26.

exemplar of the Annunciation and the Virgin Birth. Thus, in one of his sermons, Augustine had said:

You too are the members of Christ Therefore let the members of Christ give birth [to Him] in the mind, as the Virgin Mary gave birth to him in her womb; and thus you will be mothers of Christ.

*Et vos membra Christi estis Ergo in mente pariant membra Christi, sicut Maria in ventre virgo peperit Christum; et sic eritis matres Christi.*¹⁰¹

Deriving from Origen, the notion of the Annunciation to Mary as the model for the conception of Christ in the heart through the spoken word of the Holy Spirit also appears in early Christian ascetic literature.¹⁰² This notion too, then, is likely to have been involved in Gregory's image of making barren minds conceive. And his compressed formulation might be due to his humility, forbidding him to say more explicitly that the Holy Spirit or Christ, as the divine Word, might be carried through his own human words about divine acts into the possibly barren minds and hearts of his readers/listeners, to continue there his work as the Word that created all from nothing.

"Seeds of Eternal Life"

Another image, however, also resonates. In the preface to one of his saint's lives, Gregory writes:

Among the other seeds of eternal life which the heavenly Sower irrigated in the field of the untilled mind from the Fount of his Divinity by His precept, and made fertile by His teaching, He said: "Whoever does not take up his cross and follow Me, is not worthy of Me".

*Inter reliqua vitae perpetuae semina, quae coelestis sator ex illo divinitatis fonte mentis incultae arvom vel irrigavit institutione, vel dogmate fecundavit, ait: "Omnis qui non accipit crucem suam et sequitur me, non est me dignus".*¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ Augustinus Hipponensis, *Sermones* 25, 8, ed. G. MORIN, *Sancti Augustini Sermones post Maurinos reperti* (Rome, 1930), pp. 163-164.

¹⁰² DE NIE, " 'Consciousness' ", pp. 101-104. S. SPENCE, *The Rhetorics of Reason and Desire* (Ithaca and London, 1988), shows how the Annunciation is a central configuring theme in Augustine's writings.

¹⁰³ VP 2, *prol.*, p. 668; Mt 10, 38.

In contrast to Paulinus's gazing at Nicetas's face and seeing images of divine mysteries in his heart that make him conceive "fecund apprehensions", Gregory is here focused upon what is, at first sight, a verbal text. A saying of Christ with a status like that of Paulinus's law of God is imaged as a seed that is divinely sown and sprouts in a barren field (read: mind) when it is watered (read: given nourishment) through verbalized divine teaching. Elsewhere, Gregory quotes Mark, ostensibly on the same subject: "Thus is the word of God: as if a man should scatter seed ... the earth produces of itself, first the blade, then the ear, and then the full grain in the ear".¹⁰⁴ Mark, however, here speaks of the *Kingdom* of God. No doubt quoting from memory, and remembering that Mark writes elsewhere that the Kingdom is sown through the word,¹⁰⁵ Gregory has – unconsciously? – substituted "word" for "Kingdom". For Gregory, then, the dynamic pattern contained in Christ's saying is something like a living divine vegetable seed, ready to sprout, grow and bear fruit. But he also indicates that the mere beholding of miracles happening may teach the same truths.¹⁰⁶ And he appears to have hoped that in the words of his miracle stories there would likewise be living divine seeds – images of the *embodied divine truths* they tell about – that would become creative forces his hearers' hearts and minds. Instead of Paulinus's explicit images of biblical mysteries, then, Gregory presents images of contemporary miracles – embodying the larger patterns of divine truth – as precipitating new life in "barren" minds and hearts.

What we also see in this passage is that Gregory, although not intentionally using poetic devices, is not expressing his thoughts in a linear, discursive manner; he makes an associative leap – one that can be read, as in poetry, as that from one 'image' to another – which he expects his readers to recognize and follow. His style here also resembles what the late Erich Auerbach, in his magisterial book on the representation of reality in western literature – contrasting it with the uniformly lighted foreground presented in Homer – described in biblical writing as "the suggestive influence of the unexpressed, 'background' quality, multiplicity of meanings".¹⁰⁷ It senses and assumes, he writes, the hovering presence of an unfathomable but active spiritual reality all around. Gregory's style of writing, then, though non-classical in its grammar, is not

¹⁰⁴ Gregorius Turonensis, *De cursu stellarum* 11, ed. KRUSCH, *Gregorii Turonensis Opera* 2, p. 860; Mc 4, 26 and 28.

¹⁰⁵ Mc 4, 14.

¹⁰⁶ VP 19, *prol.*, p. 736.

¹⁰⁷ AUERBACH, *Mimesis*, p. 19. Auerbach himself, however, does not connect this specific quality with Gregory's writing, which he sees it as a direct, unreflective *mimesis* – albeit in a biblical kind of grammar – of what was happening around him (pp. 78-79). Cf. DE NIE, *Views*, pp. 1-2.

"confused": it was modeled upon that of the Bible and took for granted the reader's knowledge of the implicitly evoked biblical associations as the underlying coherence of meaning.

"Brief and Simple Speech"

After the prologue we find, in the *Glory of the Martyrs*, first a rapid *resumé* of Christ's birth, miracles, passion and resurrection, and thereafter – from chapter five on – more recent and contemporary miracles around relics of the Passion, the Virgin Mary and the martyrs. The – characteristically unexpressed – message here is that Christ now continues his miracles and salvational activity through the relics of his saints. In contrast, however, to Augustine's lengthy allegorical explanations of miracles in his *Treatise on the Gospel of John*, which as we saw Gregory may have had in mind while writing his prologue to *The glory of the martyrs*, his usually brief narratives rarely spell out the events' inherent spiritual messages. As already indicated, this was almost certainly due to Gregory's initial diffidence about writing, brought about by his lack of classical grammatical and literary training. For in the prologue to his collection of Saint Martin's miracles he deplores his lack of education that makes it impossible for him "to decorate (*ornare*)" his stories, and a few chapters later he regretfully hopes that God would nevertheless make him able "to unfold the bare story [of the saint's miracles] (*simplicem ... historiam explicare*)".¹⁰⁸ Later, however, this brevity became a deliberate choice, for already in the second book of his *Miracles of Saint Martin* he writes:

As we briefly write up the miracles of the holy man [Martin] without expanding these into a fuller speech, we continue the way in which we have begun with great fear, afraid that wiser men might say: "A more experienced writer could have greatly extended these things". But to us, versed as we are in the doctrine of the Church, it seems that the history that pertains to the edification of the Church should avoid wordiness and be woven with brief and simple speech, so that it may both bring forth the power of the blessed bishop and not tire the learned.

Dum singula quaque miracula beati viri succincte scribimus nec ea in ampliore sermone expandimus, verendo valde atque timendo iter carpinus inchoatum, ne forte dicatur a prudentioribus: "multum haec poterat peritus extendere". Sed nobis in ecclesiastico dogmate versantibus videtur, ut historia, quae ad aedificationem

¹⁰⁸ Gregorius Turonensis, *Virtutes sancti Martini* [hereafter VM] *prol.* and 1, 5, ed. KRUSCH, *Gregorii Turonensis Opera* 2, pp. 585-586, 591.

*ecclesiae pertinet, postposita verborum, brevi atque simplici sermone texatur, ut et virtutem beati antestitis prodat et sapientibus fastidium non inponat.*¹⁰⁹

In contrast to Paulinus, then, Gregory came to believe that – for his largely uneducated audience – an amplified and embellished description would have distracted the mind and thereby obscured the emotional impact of a miracle rather than enhanced it.

By which strategies, then, does Gregory let his “bare story” of a miracle nevertheless bring such an invisible, sprouting divine seed-pattern into his listeners’ hearts? Above all, as Auerbach also stressed, by immediacy, by not (as Paulinus) treating his story as a literary text and a take-off point for meditation, but simply reporting events as facts and making them happen before one’s eyes with arresting sensory-concrete details.¹¹⁰ Also, as we shall see, by sometimes reporting his own experience as though it were happening at that very moment. But from time to time too, as Paulinus had done, by letting sensory phenomena – events and objects – reveal something of their cosmic spiritual dimension. Thus, here and there, he points more or less obliquely to central Christian truths – a cured person, for instance, is described as “as it were born anew” – and, very significantly, uses a light imagery that always points to the possible seeing of spiritual light, of which in fact a number of perceptions, including some of his own, are reported.¹¹¹

“An Immense Brightness”

The latter may be understood as, in a sense, ‘externalized’ versions of Paulinus’s mental/ethereal illumination through meditation. Instead of pondering upon biblical texts and consciously reaching out to “apprehensions of God” – Gregory shows elsewhere, however, that he is aware of the by then traditional clerical practice of meditation¹¹² – he tells us that illumination comes to him unexpectedly and as a quasi-visible phenomenon. His stories relate many instances of this kind of spiritual vision, similar to that in the Martinian stories and which, with one possible exception (to be discussed below), cannot be found in Paulinus’s writings. Instead of consciously initiated ascents into the Divine, often involving textual material, that would have appealed to Paulinus’s

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 2. 19, p. 615. Gregory’s spelling (or that of his copyists) is non-classical.

¹¹⁰ AUERBACH, *Mimesis*, pp. 74–83, esp. pp. 78–79.

¹¹¹ See DE NIE, *Views*, pp. 176–192.

¹¹² *Hist* 5, 20, p. 228.

well-educated friends, Gregory describes what appears to be his own and ordinary people's involuntary sightings of unexpected eruptions of the holy through the veil of the physical world. Further, whereas Paulinus, notwithstanding his pinning his identity upon saint Felix, had not directly associated his contemplative, mystical ascent with his patron saint, Gregory's more practically oriented experience, as we shall see, centers on the saint's "power". This must reflect the fact that by the sixth century, the initially purely local cults of the saints had come to play a pivotal role in supporting the Church's overall political, social and economic role in stabilizing, ordering and even educating what were now violence-ridden 'barbarian' kingdoms.¹¹³

The following story, then, may be read as Gregory's equivalent of Paulinus's concept of interior "illumination". After mentioning that relics of the Virgin Mary were kept in the chapel of the estate of Marsat, he writes:

When her feast approached, I went there to celebrate the vigils. As I hastened to the chapel through the dark night, I noticed from afar such an immense brightness shining through its windows that one would have thought a multitude of lamps and candles to be lighted in it. Believing, therefore, that other devout people had already preceded us to the celebration of the vigils, I approach the door: I knock; no one responds. And finding the door locked with a key, I perceive a total silence. What more can I say? I sent for the custodian, who was in charge of locking up, so that he might open the door with the key. When he came, we lighted a candle while still outside. Meanwhile, the door opened of itself: and when we had entered – I believe it was through the darkness of my sins – the brightness which we had been admiring from outside vanished with the appearance of our candle. We could see nothing from which that brightness could have come except the holy power of the glorious Virgin.

Adveniente vero hac festivitate, ego ad caelebrandas vigilias ad eum accessi. Cumque per obscuram noctem properarem [ad] oratorium, suspicio a longe per fenestras ita inmensam claritatem effulgere, ut putaretur ibi multitudo lignorum ac cereorum esse accensa. Credens igitur, quod aliqui devotorum iam nos ad celebrandas vigilias praecessissent, accedo ad ostium, pulso nec quemquam invenio, repertumque ostium clave munitum, cuncta silentio data deprehendo. Quid plura? Transmittimus ad custodem, cui tunc erat obserandi cura, ut scilicet ostium, clave exhibita, reseraret. Dum autem ille venit, nos accendimus a foris cereum. Interea aperitur sponte et ostium; ingressisque nobis, credo a caligine peccatorum meorum, claritas quam admirabamur a foris, apparente cereo nostro, discessit;

¹¹³ See: R. VAN DAM, *Leadership and Community in Late Antique Gaul* (Berkeley etc., 1985: *The Transformation of the Classical Heritage* 8); ID., *Saints and Their Miracles in Late Antique Gaul* (Princeton, 1993); and WOOD, *Kingdoms*, pp. 71-87.

*nihil tamen praeter virtutem gloriosae Virginis aliud penitus videre potuimus, unde claritas illa fuisset exorta.*¹¹⁴

Here, Gregory believed he actually saw divine light, not after mental preparation and with his mind's eye but, unexpectedly, in a sensory-concrete church. Significantly, he believed that it manifested the holy power of relics, probably the central notion in his view of the contemporary situation of the Church,¹¹⁵ and that it was the state of his soul – not, as with Paulinus, the conscious rejection of the physical world¹¹⁶ – that determined the possibility of this kind of perception.¹¹⁷ Its models, as we have already seen Gregory indicate, are in the Bible.¹¹⁸

“The Light of Your Holy Power”

To pinpoint the similarities and differences between Paulinus's and Gregory's version of a miracle of the restoration of eyesight, the following – for Gregory, relatively expanded – description, although in prose, also reads like a poem in which the frontier between sensory and spiritual reality is blurred:

When the vigil before Christmas was ended and everyone had left, [a fifteen-year old blind beggar boy] lay kneeling at the feet of the saint [Martin], not moving. Then he seemed to feel as though someone pricked his eyes with a sharp point; suddenly blood burst forth and started flowing from them to his knees. When he then lifted up his face, he saw above him a candle shining forth, and shouting out loudly he cried: “I thank you, holy confessor of God, that I was worthy to receive my eye-light through your power!”

¹¹⁴ GM 8, p. 493.

¹¹⁵ See on the cult of relics in late antique Gaul: VAN DAM, *Leadership*, pp. 177-300; BROWN, *Cult*, pp. 86-127. On the history of the cult of relics see A. ANGENENDT, *Heilige und Reliquien: Die Geschichte ihre Kultes vom frühen Christentum bis zur Gegenwart* (München, 1994), and J. CROOK, *The Architectural Setting of the Cult of Saints in the Early Christian West, c. 300-1200* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 6-79.

¹¹⁶ Cf. *Carm* 10, vv. 171-173, p. 31-32, and, as already mentioned, *ibid.* 6, vv. 25-26, p. 8: “nos quoque fas meminisse dei et quamquam obruta multis / pectora criminibus caelestem admittere sensum”.

¹¹⁷ On Gregory's light imagery, which tends to shade into a luminous phenomenon, see DE NIE, *Views*, pp. 133-139, 161-211.

¹¹⁸ Cf. H.C. HAHN, “Light, shine, lamp; Lampo, lychnos, phaino, phos”, in: *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, 2 (Grand Rapids, 1976), pp. 484-488, 490-495.

Decursa autem festivitatis vigilia, dum, recedentibus aliis, hic ad pedes sancti decubaret immobilis, tunc sensit, quasi pupugisset aliquis oculos eius ab spiculo, et statim sanguis ab his erumpens, coepit defluere per genas eius, aversaque sursum facie, vidit super se cereum elucere, et exclamans voce magna, ait: "Gratias tibi ago, sanctae [sic!] confessor Dei, quia virtute tua lumen recipere merui".

The reference to the saint's using a sharp point (penknife?) evokes Sulpicius's story of saint Martin, during his life, removing what was probably a cataract from Paulinus's eye(s) – an incident, however, that Paulinus does not mention in any of his surviving writings.¹¹⁹ Thereupon Gregory, now addressing the saint directly, bursts into an exclamation of praise:

O wonderful grace! O immeasurable power! Truly you scatter your gifts among the people for all sorts of ailments. For the one who had asked for alms, received eye-light and, long deprived of external light, his face is now adorned with the light of your holy power. O if the darkness of our many sins did not hide you from our sight, you would certainly come in a visible manner ...

*O admirabilis gratia! O virtus immensa ! Multimodis enim affectibus dona tua spargis in populos. Nam qui stipem petierat, lumen recepit, et diu extera luce [privato], virtutis tuae lumine vultus ornatur. O si te multorum criminum tenebrae a nostris visibus non arcerent, nempe venires visibiliter ...*¹²⁰

The emphasis, again, on light as a manifestation of holy power is a conspicuous difference with Paulinus. Similar, however, is Gregory's assumption that the saint was personally present and – by mentioning the proximity of Christmas – suggesting indirectly that the active agent in the miracle may have been the light of Christ, perhaps as "present" in the light of the candle that was standing on Martin's holy tomb. For it is first said to shine into the boy's eyes, and they are from then on said to shine with Christ's power through Martin. By simply telling the story as though it were happening before one's eyes – without diverting *ekphrases* and extensive supplicatory rhetoric – the spiritually charged images of the event would, like images in a dream, have been affectively received by the believing listener without the distancing interference of conscious imaginative construction. Gregory's miracle stories read like embodied dream poetry being seen to happen. And, I suggest, it is such a dreamlike or 'poetic' mode of awareness – as we saw, associated with the absence of sin: that is, a self-centred obstruction of the ears and eyes of the

¹¹⁹ VsM 19. 3 (ed. FONTAINE, pp. 292-294).

¹²⁰ VM 3, 16, p. 636.

heart to the subtle hints and flashes of God's messages – that is thought to make seeing the holy presence possible.

Whereas Paulinus is most often seen accessing the saint only through prayer,¹²¹ Gregory tells many stories in which material objects that had been in contact with the holy – often, as in the case of relics, visually unimpressive ones – have become direct conduits to the saint and his power.¹²² As also appears in the following story, saint Martin's tomb and everything that had been in contact with it is central. Here, another, different, kind of illumination takes place through a candle that had first stood on the saint's tomb. When a relative fell ill, Gregory sent it to him with the instruction: "light it in front of him and let him pray to the Lord while contemplating its light, and beseech the almighty bishop [Martin] to help him (*Accendite illum coram eo, et in contemplatione luminis orationem fundat ad Dominum et deprecetur omnipotentiam antestitis, ut ei succurrat*)".¹²³ Contemplation, according to a recent encyclopedia of alternate realities, is a non-verbal, imagistic but focused state of mind;¹²⁴ in this instance, it must be very close to meditation, a state of awareness in which the subject affectively unites with the object focused upon, as a living, power-charged, reality.¹²⁵ Gregory reports that after this had been done, and a potion containing the crushed burned-up wick had been ingested, the cure followed instantly. The healed man later told him that "at the first moment that that ray from the candle drove the darkness of night from his eyes, at once in the contemplation of the flame, the fever left his body (*ubi primum oculis eius iubar luminis progressum a cereo tenbras pepulit noctis, protinus in contemplatione flammae, febris recessit a corpore*)". As in Paulinus, night and darkness, in Gregory's writings, tend to point to sin and the Devil,¹²⁶ who is often referred to as responsible for illness;¹²⁷ the light of the candle flame, of course, can be understood to transmit

¹²¹ In *Carm* 28, v. 114, p. 296, however, he mentions that once – in dire need of divine help – he pressed his lips upon the altar that covered the apostles' relics: "*inpositis subiecti altaribus ora*".

¹²² In three of his stories – in one of which a picture of Christ bleeds when pierced – Gregory somewhat surprisingly also suggests the immanence of Christ in a pictorial representation (GM 20-22, ed. KRUSCH, pp. 500-501). I have discussed these in their context in G. DE NIE, "The poet as visionary: Venantius Fortunatus's 'new mantle' for Saint Martin", *Cassiodorus* 3 (1997), pp. 54-57.

¹²³ VM 2, 2, p. 610.

¹²⁴ L. GEORGE, *Alternative Realities: The Paranormal, the Mystic and the Transcendent in Human Experience* (New York, 1995), p. 55.

¹²⁵ See DEIKMAN, "Meditation", and cf. what is called *rêverie* around the same phenomenon in literature: G. BACHELARD, *La flamme d'une chandelle* (Paris, 1961).

¹²⁶ See DE NIE, *Views*, pp. 161-164.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 230-237.

that of Christ.¹²⁸ Probably assuming these implicit images to speak for themselves to those capable of understanding, Gregory does not – like Paulinus – expand upon this, and he concludes by simply, almost bluntly, pressing home his point by attributing the cure to the power of the saint. Whereas I would imagine Paulinus to have spoken in the measured and somewhat indirect manner of civilized elegance, Gregory's writings and what he reports of his own conversations with others – even kings – appear to indicate that he could be quite blunt.¹²⁹

Observing through the eyes of modern psychology, what we see happening here is that the act of "contemplation" or meditation must have set aside the commonsensical awareness of the merely material candle and replaced it with a kind of waking-dream-awareness in which the light of the candle was regarded as transmitting a living divine reality: that of Christ as the Light of the world. And the internalization of this affect-laden image – as the visualization and concretization of a powerful emotional or energy pattern – brought about its spontaneous interior affective replication in the beholder's mind and body. Evidence not only from modern psychology and anthropology,¹³⁰ but also from medical science confirms that this process actually takes place. What is believed to be an ancient part of the brain, the hypothalamus, translates the image's affective patterns into a congruent message to the body's autonomous systems.¹³¹ The instructions for self-healing of one modern faith healer, too, stresses the necessity for specific mental imaging during a cure.¹³² Whereas an affective interior replication of Theridius's illumination uses no props¹³³ and requires biblical learning and a relatively strenuous imaginative process, the contemplation of the candle and ingestion of its wick has something sensory-concrete to keep the attention focused and needs only a firm faith, a simple act, and the non-commonsensical state of awareness that anyway tends to

¹²⁸ See on light in Gregory's stories: *Ibid.*, pp. 161-211; about the incident with the candle flame: pp. 198-200.

¹²⁹ As, e.g. his altercation with King Chilperic in *Hist* 5. 44, pp. 252-254.

¹³⁰ E.g. J. ACHTERBERG, *Imagery and Healing: Shamanism and Modern Medicine* (Boston and London, 1985); F. GOODMAN, *Ecstasy, Ritual and Alternate Reality. Religion in a Pluralistic World* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1988); R. DEVISCH, *Weaving the Threads of Life: The "Khita" Gyn-Eco-Logical Healing Cult among the Yaka* (Chicago, 1993).

¹³¹ B.S. SIEGEL MD, *Love, Medicine and Miracles* (New York, 1986), pp. 66-69.

¹³² A. SANFORD, *The Healing Light*, rev. edn. (New York, 1972), pp. 22-23, and *passim*.

¹³³ Paulinus's description of himself lovingly "fingering" Valgius's ear ("*auriculam saepe palpantes*") after the old man had told him that Christ had tweaked it (*Ep* 49. 14, p. 403), however, suggests that his ethereal inclination had its limits. As will be indicated below, however, I have some reservations about Paulinus's sincerity in this letter; he may have been embellishing as well as 'talking down' to the addressee in question: a government official.

accompany prolonged intense prayer and copious tears: the standard preamble to many of the cures related by Gregory.¹³⁴ The practice here described, then, was something which anyone in his time could understand and imitate. Its purpose was not, as with Paulinus, the transforming contemplation of divine mysteries through the illumination of Christ or the Holy Spirit, but the practical one of accessing the saint's power of emotional and physical healing. The contemplation of the divine mystery of Christ's healing light¹³⁵ that nevertheless took place through staring into the candle flame is apparently unconscious.

3. "*The Keenness of Inner Vision*" – or "*Awed Wonder*"?

The similarities and differences between Paulinus's and Gregory's envisionings of invisible holy reality in sensory phenomena are epitomized in what they tell us about their experiences around a particle of the Holy Cross.

"*Look Upon the Whole Power of the Cross*"

It is in a prose letter to his friend Severus that Paulinus gives instructions for a meditation upon this most precious relic,¹³⁶ of which his good friend Severus had just received a small part:

In this almost indivisible particle of a small sliver [of wood] take up protection in the present and the guarantee of your eternal salvation. Let your faith not be constricted because the eyes of the body behold evidence so small; let it look with the keenness of inner vision upon the whole power of the Cross in this tiny segment. While you think you are seeing that wood, upon which our Salvation, upon which the Lord in majesty, was hanged with nails while the world trembled, you too must tremble and rejoice. Let us remember that "the rocks were rent" at the sight of this Cross, and in emulation of the rocks, rend our hearts with the fear of God. Let us recall that the veil of the temple was also rent by this same mystery of the Cross. We must realize that this rending was revealed to us so that, hearing the word of the Lord and of the mystery of his boundless love, we should not harden

¹³⁴ A particularly detailed description is given in VM 3, *prol.*, p. 632. Cf. P. ADNÈS, "Larmes", in: *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité* 9 (Paris, 1976), pp. 287-303.

¹³⁵ The title of A. SANFORD's book (see note 132).

¹³⁶ Meditation upon the Cross was a very early Christian practice: CARRUTHERS, *Craft*, pp. 168-170. On the roots of early Christian meditation see: P. HADOT, "Antike Methodik der geistigen Übungen im Frühchristentum", *Humanistische Bildung* 4 (1981), pp. 31-62.

our hearts, but remove ourselves from the things of the flesh and rend the veil of unbelief, so that, with an unveiled face of the heart we may see the mysteries of God's saving gifts.

*in segmento pene atomo hastulae brevis sumite munimentum praesentis et pignus aeternae salutis. non angustetur fides vestra carnalibus oculis parva cernentibus, sed interna acie totam in hoc minimo vim crucis videat. dum videre vos cogitatis lignum illud, quo salus nostra, quo dominus maiestatis adfixus tremante mundo pependit, exultetis cum tremore. recordemur et petras fissas ad huius adspexit crucis, et saltem saxonum aemulatione praecordia nostra findamus timore divino. reputemus et velum templi eodem crucis mysterio scissum et intellegamus illius veli scissuram eo fuisse praetentam, ut audientes vocem domini et mysterium pietatis immensae non obduremus corda nostra, sed a carnalibus dividamur et scindamus infidelitatis velamen, ut revelata cordis facie salutarium dei munerum sacramenta videamus.*¹³⁷

Paulinus advises visualizing the salvational "power" of the Cross: a general, composite notion. Similarly, physical matters must be transcended and the heart opened in trust toward non-physical ones. Thus the Christ hanging on the Cross is not noticeably a suffering one but a divine *maiestas*. As we saw earlier too, Paulinus tends to imagine Christ as the divine Creator, Word, Wisdom and Light rather than as palpably human. Contemplative immersion in Him, then, and the resulting illumination of "the keenness of inner vision" or the mind's eye, is again Paulinus's goal.¹³⁸

The phrase "unveiled face" points to the understanding of the spirit rather than the letter of the Old Testament text in the practice of allegorical interpretation as mentioned in the passage in the apostle Paul's letters which we found resonating in Paulinus's description of his beholding Nicetas's face. He appears to have understood this passage as referring to the conscious, purposive, meditational process which he advocates here and there. And he reports only one miracle connected with the relic of the Cross: that when he held it up against a fire, the latter died down.¹³⁹ As we shall see, however, the veracity of this story appears somewhat uncertain.

¹³⁷ *Epp* 31, 1, p. 268; *Mt* 27, 51; *Mc* 15, 38.

¹³⁸ It is within a *Natalicium* about the theft and miraculous return of an ornamental cross in one of Paulinus's churches that we find another, elaborate meditative visualization of associations around the Cross. This one, however, derives and creates copious images that are analogues of the jeweled gold cross's visible appearance (*Carm* 19, vv. 604-676, pp. 139-141). I have analyzed it in depth in: DE NÏE, "Paulinus", pp. 8-13.

¹³⁹ *Carm* 28, vv. 104-137, pp. 295-297.

“They Had in Themselves the Riveting Nails”

Gregory’s version of a meditation on the mentally visualized Cross, in the preface to one of his saints’ lives from which we have already cited the initial quotation, is similar and yet totally different. Instead of imagining a generalized salvation and affectively imitating splitting rocks while ostensibly ignoring the human Christ’s physical suffering, his saints “take up their cross” by doing what the apostle Paul had urged:

“Always carrying in the body the death of Christ so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in your mortal body”.¹⁴⁰ Therefore the confessors of Christ, not afflicted by the time of persecution unto martyrdom, became their own persecutors and, so that they might be worthy of God, afflicted themselves with the various crosses of abstinence; and so that, with mortified bodies, they might live only through Him – according to what the same apostle said: “Now it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me”.¹⁴¹ For they saw through the eyes of their inner mind the Lord descending to the earth ... [and] compassionately humiliated in order to redeem the world; they saw hanging on the gallows not the glory of Divinity, but the pure offering of an assumed body, about which John had earlier foresaid: “Behold the Lamb of God! Behold who suffers for the sins of the world!”¹⁴² They had in themselves too the riveting nails, when, transfixed by fear of Him, and terrified by the divine Judgment, they carried nothing unworthy of His omnipotence in the dwelling of their bodies In them shone too the splendid light of resurrection, with which ... Jesus was resplendent when he unexpectedly stood in the middle of the apostles’ gathering in a room whose doors had been bolted.¹⁴³

“Semper mortificationem Christi in corpore vestro circumferentes, ut et vita Iesu manifestetur in corpore vestro mortali”. Ergo confessores Christi, quos tempus persecutionis ad martyrium non lacessivit, ipsi sibi persecutoris [Christi] modo, ut digni Deo haberentur, diversas abstinentiae cruces adhibuerunt; et ut, mortificatis membris, soli illi viverent, de quo idem apostolus dixit: “Iam non vivo ego; vivit autem in me Christus”. Aspiciebant enim per illos mentis internae oculos Dominum caelorum descendisse ad terras ... humiliatum misericorditer ad mundi redemptionem; aspiciebant pendentem in patibulo non Deitatis gloriam, sed adsumpti corporis hostiam mundam, de qua Iohannes paulo ante praedixerat: “Ecce Agnus Dei! Ecce qui tollit peccata huius mundi!”. Habebant in se et clavorum adfixionem, cum a timore eius confixi atque a iudiciis divinis exterriti, nihil in-

¹⁴⁰ II Cor 4, 10.

¹⁴¹ Gal 2, 20.

¹⁴² Io 1, 29.

¹⁴³ Io 20, 19 (luminosity is not mentioned here, however).

*dignum eius omnipotentiae in cordis sui habitatione gerebant. Fulgebat in his et illud resurrectionis lumen insigne, quo ... Iesus splenduit sub illa ostiorum obscurorum inclusione, cum improvisus in medio [illo] apostolici senatus adstetit comitatu ...*¹⁴⁴

In contrast to Paulinus's more intellectual approach that rigorously turns away from the concerns of the flesh, then, Gregory's ideal saints – here, however, also practising controlled mental imaging – are re-experiencing Christ's physical suffering as a purification and means to access his presence. Significantly, the spiritual glow of their bodies – replicated in them through their envisioning the luminous risen Christ? – seems to be presented as being actually visible.

"Having Come to Myself"

And when we thereupon examine Gregory's story about his own experience in the presence of a particle of the Cross, we see again that he lives in a world very different from that of Paulinus.¹⁴⁵ A skilful story-teller, Gregory contrives to let the reader-listener participate in his own jolt of astonishment and subsequent surrender to what, as we shall see, he calls not the, controlled, "keenness of inner vision" – implicitly distinguishing between an interior and an exterior reality – but a unitive "silent, awed wonder". He begins by telling us that he had often heard it said that the lamps burning near the relic of the Holy Cross in Poitiers "boiled over through divine power, exuding so much oil that they filled containers placed beneath them several times", but had never been moved to believe the story. Then, during one visit to the city, he also visited the convent chapel in which this relic was kept, prostrating himself and praying before it. He writes that after he had finished his prayers he noticed that, on his right, a lighted lamp was dripping oil (he is likely, however, to have noticed the dripping earlier interfering with his concentrated prayer), and tells his readers:

I call God to witness that I thought the vessel was broken, because a bowl had been placed underneath, into which the spilling oil fell. Turning then to the abbess, I say:

¹⁴⁴ VP 2, *prol.*, p. 668.

¹⁴⁵ I have discussed Gregory's and others' perceptions of this miracle and related ones in: DE NIE, "Configurations", and also in: EAD., "A broken lamp or the effluence of holy power? Common sense and belief-reality in Gregory of Tours' own experience", *Mediävistik* 3 (1990), pp. 269-279, reprinted in: EAD., *Word, Image and Experience*, VI.

“Are you then so lazy that you are unable to take the trouble of providing an unbroken lamp, in which the oil burns, instead of a broken one from which the oil runs out?”

And she replies: “That is not the case, my lord. What you see is the power of the Holy Cross.”

Then – having come to myself, recalling what I had previously heard said, and having turned to the lamp – [I see] it overflowing with great streams, in that very hour pouring over with swelling waves and, as I believe, increasing more and more in volume in order to reprove my unbelief; so that in one hour’s time the vessel brought forth more than a sextarius [i.e. about a pint], while it itself could not hold even a quarter of a sextarius.

Having gazed at it in awed wonder, I fell silent, and ever since have preached the power of the to-be-adored Cross.

testor Deum, quia putavi, quasi vas esset effractum, quia erat ei concha subposita, in qua oleum defluens decidebat. Tunc conversus ad abbatissam, aio: “Tantane te retenet mentis ignavia, ut integrum cicendile laborare non possis, in quo oleum accendatur, nisi effractum quo defluat ponas?”

Et illa: “Non est ita, domine mi, sed virtus est crucis sanctae, quae cernis”.

Tunc ego ad me reversus, et ad memoriam revocans quae prius audieram, conversus ad lychnum, ...¹⁴⁶ in modum ollae ferventis magnis fluctibus exundare ac per horam ipsam, undis tumescentibus, superfluere et, ut credo, ad incredulitatem meam arguendam magis ac magis augeri, ita ut in unius horae spatii plus quam unum sestarium redderet vasculum, quod quartarium non tenebat.

Admiratusque silui ac virtutem adorandae crucis deinceps praedicavi.¹⁴⁷

The use of the present tense in the verbal exchange, if not also in describing his own activity thereafter, gives immediacy to the event. What we see happening is that after prayer, in a religious ambience, and upon the word of a religious authority figure – all mentioned by Clifford Geertz as inducing a “slipping into” what he calls a previously accepted non-common sense “belief reality”¹⁴⁸ – Gregory abruptly changes what has been called the “visual concept”¹⁴⁹ through which he had been perceiving the lamp: replacing that of a broken one with the image of a miraculously overflowing one in the story he had heard. This implies a radical change of attitude as well: from a distancing, critical looking at

¹⁴⁶ KRUSCH inserts the textual variant “*vidi*” here, p. 668, note p; H.L. BORDIER, *Les livres des miracles et autres opuscules de Georges Florent Grégoire*, 4 vols. (Paris, 1857), 1, p. 16, chooses the variant which I here prefer: “*video*”.

¹⁴⁷ GM 5, p. 490.

¹⁴⁸ C. GEERTZ, “Religion as a cultural system”, in: ID., *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York, 1973), pp. 93, 114, 122.

¹⁴⁹ This is the term of R. ARNHEIM, *Visual Thinking* (Berkeley, 1969), pp. 90-91.

sensory appearances to one that is prepared to merge affectively with them and sense in them a divine dynamic pattern. He calls this switching to the remembered story and to the unitive mode of awareness it presupposes "having come to myself". And he stayed, spellbound as it were, to watch the phenomenon. The abbe's words that he is seeing an epiphany, then, are for him a *cue* to enter instantly – or to return, for he had just been praying – into a waking-dreamlike state of awed wonder. We have already seen traces of such an attitude elsewhere in his writings, but there is also considerable evidence of it in the hagiographical writings of his friend Venantius Fortunatus.¹⁵⁰ It looks as though, in late sixth century Gaul, this state of mind must have been a prescribed and habitual one in the sphere of the sacred – the real reality. Instead of reasoning as it were horizontally, it leaped and lived and *felt* in affectively charged images.¹⁵¹ Outside the sacred sphere, however, let me hasten to say, Gregory – as his *Histories* show¹⁵² – was an extremely businesslike and able administrator and diplomat. When we compare his consummately able contemporary Pope Gregory the Great's administrative letters with his miracle-studded *Dialogues* and meditative-meandering *Moralia*, we see the same juxtaposition and apparently effortless combination in one person, of what would today be regarded as diametrically opposed states of mind.¹⁵³

One possible modern explanation of our Gregory's experience of the dripping lamp is that of conditioned perception. Psychological experiments have shown that from all the sensory data that present themselves to our eyes, we are conditioned to select only a few, and to structure and identify these according to a model chosen from those already in our minds.¹⁵⁴ And as one psychologist has said, the information that comes to us through our senses "is not directly transformed into a conscious report. What is consciously perceived is imagery which is created by the organism itself. ... The world we see is a dream we learn to have from a script we have not written".¹⁵⁵ The "dream" with

¹⁵⁰ See on this: G. DE NIE, "Poetics of wonder: Dream-consciousness and transformational dynamics in sixth-century miracle stories", in: EAD., *Word, Image and Experience*, XIV.

¹⁵¹ It is especially this kind of awareness and its ramifications that I have explored in Gregory's writings in DE NIE, *Views*.

¹⁵² The information is admirably collected and presented in PIETRI, *Ville de Tours*, pp. 246-334.

¹⁵³ See: R. MARKUS, *Gregory the Great and His World* (Cambridge, 1997) as compared with W.D. MCCREADY, *Signs of Sanctity: Miracles in the Thought of Gregory the Great* (Toronto, 1989) and C. DAGENS, *Saint Grégoire le Grand: Culture et expérience chrétiennes* (Paris, 1977).

¹⁵⁴ ARNHEIM, *Visual Thinking*, pp. 90-91.

¹⁵⁵ S.S. TOMKINS, *Affect, Imagery and Consciousness*, 1- (New York and London, 1963-), 1, p. 13.

which Gregory was brought up was the biblical world view; it included not only its miracles as models of reality but also Christ's saying that "with God all things are possible".¹⁵⁶ Since perception and imagination have been observed to use some of the same pathways in the brain,¹⁵⁷ such expectations – and hopes – about what will be seen will have greatly influenced his perception. And thus a modern reader might dismiss Gregory's perception as suggestion followed by hallucination. Geertz also observes that such an event is a "model" that "produces" in the worshipper the reality it is believed to exhibit.¹⁵⁸

Another possibility, however, is that Gregory was here receiving or conceiving his own kind of "*divinus sensus*": contemplating what he believed to be a dynamic of his spiritual universe in those of a sensory-concrete event. For what was Gregory sensing and affectively absorbing – with or without consciously imaging it – and inviting the reader-listener to sense and absorb, if not the generous pattern of Christ's heart, as "the Fountain of Light (*fons luminis*)" as Ambrose's hymn has it,¹⁵⁹ constantly overflowing into his Creation? This, I suggest, must be Gregory's version of Paulinus's envisioning of the divine Hand as the "*divinus sensus*" of the miracle; characteristically, however, the sixth-century bishop does not mention it. It was perhaps too deep to be expressed in words.

What kind of, perhaps pre-verbal, experience can this have been? In what, today, has been called extrasensory perception or clairvoyance, the subject, in a dream or in what may be described as a (momentary) waking-dreamlike state of mind, senses invisible energy patterns as present in the mind and/or in the surroundings, and these show up as spontaneous mental images which may or may not be projected onto sensory objects.¹⁶⁰ One might regard it, I suggest, as

¹⁵⁶ Mt 19, 26; Mc 10, 27.

¹⁵⁷ J.L. SINGER, *Imagery and Daydream Methods in Psychotherapy and Behavior Modification* (New York, 1974), pp. 175-176. A great deal of research has been done on mental imagery in the past decades, also outside the therapeutic sphere. For instance: *Imagery*, ED. n. BLOCK (Cambridge, MA, and London, 1981), and S.M. KOSSLYN, *Image and Brain: The Resolution of the Imagery Debate* (Cambridge, MA, and London, 1994).

¹⁵⁸ GEERTZ, "Religion", p. 95, adduces the example of a Javanese mystic staring into the flame of a lamp "with what he takes to be an intimation of divinity" as "a synoptic formulation [...] of the character of reality" and "as [a] template[...] for producing reality with such a character".

¹⁵⁹ G.M. DREWES, *Analecta hymnica medii aevi* 50 (Leipzig, 1907), pp. 11-12. On the experienced quality of light in Gregory's writings, see DE NIE, *Views*, pp. 161-207.

¹⁶⁰ GEORGE, *Realities*, pp. 52, 86-91. Although there is as yet no scientific consensus on ESP, statistics of 50 years' research of this phenomenon suggest that "ESP is more likely when a person's attention is withdrawn from the external world and focused inward" (p. 90). A positive assessment, however, by scholars and trained physicians, of the mind's possibilities in these

an extended and intensified mode of poetic envisioning – "a holier kind of perception". Not by means of Paulinus's self-controlled "mind's eye", but through what the late Henri Corbin has validated as – often involuntary – "epiphanic imagination",¹⁶¹ in which images representing invisible energy patterns simply appear in the mind or in perception without having been consciously looked for, evoked or expected. Not only Gregory's writings but also those of his contemporaries¹⁶² show that this kind of sudden perceptions in "awed wonder", as well as visions, occurred more often and were regarded as validating the Church's teachings about invisible realities.¹⁶³

Paulinus: "An Almost Physical Act"?

Is there anything in Paulinus's writings that resembles this? In one of his letters, an experience is described that, at first sight, appears to come close to such a perception: his fulsome description of the old sailor Valgius's vision of saint Felix and Christ guiding his rudderless ship in a storm.¹⁶⁴ But, although the core experience of heavenly aid seems clear, the old man's evident utter simplicity and the fact that, as appears at the very end of the letter, the story was intended to persuade a Roman official to return the stranded ship's contents to

directions is put forth in: K. SHANOR, *The Emerging Mind* (Los Angeles, 1999). See on the approach of extra-sensory perception via modern cognitive research, J. DIERKENS, "Apparitions et théories psychologiques contemporaines", in: *Apparitions et miracles*, ed. A. DIERKENS (Bruxelles, 1991: *Problèmes d'histoire des religions*), pp. 7-46. On p. 37, he states: "L'attitude réductionniste de la plupart des approches scientifiques (faisant des apparitions un symptôme psycho-pathologique ou un effet d'influence de groupe) concernant les apparitions doit céder le pas à une attitude qui fasse appel aux nouvelles conceptions psychologiques, telle que la psychologie transpersonnelle, qui s'applique à l'étude systématique des états de conscience et qui valorise entre autres la spécificité des créations artistiques et des phénomènes dits mystiques et/ou religieux".

¹⁶¹ H. CORBIN, *L'imagination créatrice dans le soufisme d'ibn 'Arabi* (Paris, 1964, 1998²), pp. 12-14, 29-30.

¹⁶² On visions reported by Gregory, see: DE NIE, *Views*, pp. 213-293; on extra-sensory experiences in the writings of his friend Venantius Fortunatus: EAD., "Poetics"; and in Gregory the Great: MCCREADY, *Signs*, pp. 122-124, esp. p. 124: "Gregory acknowledged the reality of a spiritual vision as a divinely bestowed gift. It enabled its recipient to 'see' through bodily images spiritual realities invisible to naked corporeal vision".

¹⁶³ Epiphanies, however, were then already an ancient tradition, also in the pagan world; see: E. PAX, "Epiphanie", in: *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* 5 (Stuttgart, 1962), col. 852-909, and, e.g. R.L. FOX, *Pagans and Christians in the Mediterranean World from the Second Century A.D. to the Conversion of Constantine* (London, 1986), pp. 102-167.

¹⁶⁴ *Epp* 49, pp. 390-404; analyzed in: DE NIE, "Paulinus", pp. 24-27.

its owner, make Paulinus's elaborate and detailed description look more like embellishment in the service of exerting influence, and the product of his own wishful imagination, than – as described – the sailor's actual experience.¹⁶⁵

In addition, an almost-perception, this time by Paulinus himself and described as such in one of the *Natalicia*, makes the difference with Gregory's experience very clear. When a fire, originating in a nearby peasant's hut, threatened to destroy the buildings around Felix's shrine, Paulinus tells his audience that, after praying to Felix, he "saw him to be present through the almost physical act of holding out his hand against the flames, thereby protecting our thresholds which adjoined his (*quem prope corporeo praesentem vidimus actu obiectare manus flammis et nostra tueri limina iuncta suis*)".¹⁶⁶ What is "an almost physical act"? What Paulinus probably meant to say is that he saw – with his mind's eye – the saint to be almost physically present and active (as a transparent figure, perhaps?), but was constrained by the requirements of poetic metre to present his thought in this fractured manner. Immediately thereafter, and apparently without sensing a contradiction, however, he proceeds to describe as a miracle – *mira loquar*¹⁶⁷ – how the flames died through lack of wind. Significantly, this is followed by a fervent prayer to the saint: a request to save him and his community "in a similar manner (*consimili modo*)"¹⁶⁸ from imminent barbarian attack; for the year then is 402, and the Visigoths are making devastating incursions into Italy. Is Paulinus here retrospectively imagining something to persuade himself and others, as well as the saint, that he should and will be helped? (His community was indeed spared that year, but suffered destruction in the aftermath of the sack of Rome in 410.¹⁶⁹) This conjecture appears to be supported by his remembering the self-same incident quite differently two years later. Surprisingly, he now tells his audience in another birthday poem for the saint that these flames had died through his own holding a particle of the Holy Cross against them, and then adds that Felix even did him a favour by starting this fire (!) because he, Paulinus, had been planning to raze the huts of the – obstinately resisting – peasant anyway, in order to clear the view upon his new buildings.¹⁷⁰ It is difficult not to sense imaginal opportunism as well as landlordly authoritarianism here.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁵ Cf. TROUT, *Paulinus*, pp. 188-192.

¹⁶⁶ *Carm* 26, vv. 401-403, p. 261.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, v. 407, p. 261.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, v. 413, p. 261.

¹⁶⁹ TROUT, *Paulinus*, p. 15.

¹⁷⁰ *Carm* 28, vv. 60-166, pp. 293-298.

¹⁷¹ As also: TROUT, *Paulinus*, p. 171.

The Poetics of Miracle

The comparison of Paulinus's and Gregory's descriptions of a miracle of the restoration of eyesight through divine illumination and of their envisionings around a concrete particle of the Holy Cross reveals a remarkable shift in religious mentality among the Gallo-Roman upper class between the early fifth and the late sixth centuries. Whereas Paulinus uses imaginative strategies to let his poetic description of a miracle induce the beholding of a symbol of the cosmic Creator Christ, the more practical-minded Gregory focuses upon presenting the concrete healing process and envisions saint Martin in the body doing it. As for the particle of the Cross: whereas Paulinus gives instructions for a self-controlled meditational exercise, presents the crucified Christ as a *dominus maiestatis* and focuses upon the composite general notion of salvation, for Gregory participation in the suffering body of Christ is central. His experience of a particle of the Cross, too, is not initiated by an act of will but by a jolt of recognition that precipitates a sudden spontaneous lapse into an awareness of a non-commonsense, dreamlike, reality, in which a sensory-concrete dripping oil lamp becomes a theophany.

One crucial difference between these two authors' approaches to, and representation of, invisible dynamics, then, appears to be Paulinus's approach to physical appearances as something to be transcended as against Gregory's attention to the body and sensory phenomena as receptors and epiphanies of divine dynamics. Paulinus, frightened by the crumbling Roman world around him and meditated upon sacred texts in the relatively secure seclusion of his monastic community, focused upon the biblical text as the avenue to God, and imaged his deepest and highest self, found companionship, comfort and protection, experienced the flash of inspiration and found beautiful words in heaven. Believing that he could conceive and see images of invisible ethereal reality only through a self-initiated asceticism, meditative receptivity and controlled imagination, he attempted to make his highly educated listeners consciously re-enact this process by as it were 'enchanting' them with an elegant imaged poetry that, as a text, floats above the visible sensory world.

Gregory, on the other hand, having to deal actively every day with all kinds of practical matters and with much more insecurity and violence than Paulinus ever knew, poured out his heart, and found comfort and forgiveness, healing and protection through simple actions everyone could imitate, especially physical contact: touching Martin's hard, solid marble tomb or the cloth upon it. And he not only experienced epiphanies in sensory objects and events, but also believed that Christ, as the divine Word and Creator, could be carried in his

own humble human language about the smallest miracles as happening in the present sensory world into the listeners' hearts to create an apprehension of their inherent larger divine truths. Contrary to Paulinus's rigorous separation between the inner and the outer worlds, Gregory's inner world – in the religious sphere coalesced, as in dreams and poems, with the sensory one around him. His descriptions of miracles are embodied poetry.

There is, however, one image in which Paulinus's and Gregory's views of how invisible realities may be apprehended seem to converge: that of an impregnation in the mind of images of divine mysteries – as seeds – by a higher spiritual dimension and the mind's subsequent conceiving of these images as living realities. In their different ways, their testimonies appear to point the modern reader to the faculty of what might be designated as 'poetic' imagination as the tool with which to apprehend and explore the invisible dynamic energy patterns which – also according to not a few modern testimonies – we all probably experience subliminally and continuously around us and within us, and to which we usually do not pay any attention whatsoever. In his book *Wholeness and the Implicate Order*,¹⁷² the late theoretical physicist and philosopher David Bohm lets many modern mathematical and physical experiments show unmistakable traces of an enveloping higher-dimensional ground of constantly creative energy – the implicate order: a "holomovement",¹⁷³ as he calls it – of which our minds and the explicate visible world (with its time and space regularities) are partial projections, and that is in a constant process of simultaneous enfolding and unfolding in non-causal, non-local ways. In contrast to the visible (explicate) order, what he calls the creative "moments" of this, not directly accessible, higher dimensional ground would be implicated in our deepest inwardness, of whose patterns we tend to be scarcely aware¹⁷⁴ – an insight that appears to be similar to that of Paulinus and Augustine. Gregory's inner experience (if one may call it that), as we have seen, tended to coalesce with, or become conscious as, that of his sensory surroundings.

An extremely erudite contemporary theologian, biblical scholar and psychotherapist, Eugen Drewermann, who has published extensively about imagery in dreams, visions, biblical prophecy and miracles, suggests that certain collective *image-patterns, lighting up in what he calls dream-consciousness or the pre-verbal, iconic mode of awareness, are our own visualizations of invisible divine dynamic patterns in the heart which are God's way of speaking with*

¹⁷² D. BOHM, *Wholeness and the Implicate Order* (London and New York, 1981).

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, pp. 150-157.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 52-53.

humankind.¹⁷⁵ In their similar and yet so different ways, Paulinus’s and Gregory’s writings appear to show that, for them, seeing a miracle and experiencing the presence of a relic of the central Christian mystery was being confronted with a sensory manifestation of, or pointer to, such a dynamic pattern and, as it were, “conceiving” – inventing as well as finding, as Paul Ricoeur says¹⁷⁶ – its image as a “*divinus sensus*” in the heart and mind.

¹⁷⁵ E. DREWERMANN, *Tiefenpsychologie und Exegese*, 2 vols. (Olten and Freiburg im Br., 1984-1985), 1, p. 101: “der Traum [ist] eine wesentliche Form, ja sogar *die* zentrale Form, der Gotteserfahrung”; *ibid.*, 2, pp. 74-140, 239-245, 311-435.

¹⁷⁶ P. RICOEUR, *La métaphore vive* (Paris, 1975), p. 310; translated by R. CZERNY as *The Rule of Metaphor: Multidisciplinary Studies of the Creation of Meaning in Language* (Toronto, 1977), p. 246.

Ideals of Community in Late Antiquity: John Cassian and Gregory the Great on Communicating Sanctity

WILLEMEN OTTEN

1. Preamble

This article will deal with the relationship between sanctity and invisibility as mediated through the incarnation. The connection between sanctity and invisibility may not be immediately clear, inasmuch as sanctity seems to represent above all the world of visible signs of the divine. Let me begin to explain, therefore, how I see the connection between sanctity and invisibility, as I set out to analyze it below.

Saints are what Peter Brown has called impresarios of the divine. That means that, not unlike modern day impresarios, they have connections, not with celebrity artists but with the divine. Whether these connections directly involve God himself or go via his messengers, such as the angels or the heavenly community of saints and martyrs, is of secondary importance. As Brown has increasingly stressed in his recent work on the holy man, however, we should not forget how the saints themselves are also dependent on the good graces of the divine. The saints are clients of the divine in heaven as much as they may act as their vicegerents on earth. Thus they are caught in a heavenly bind, so to speak, the bind of the invisible.¹

¹ See on this P. BROWN, *Authority and the Sacred: Aspects of the Christianization of the Roman World* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 55-78 ("Arbiters of the holy" and "The christian holy man in late antiquity"). Revising his earlier views about the holy man, Brown calls him alternatively

It is one thing to study ideas of sainthood historically by following in Brown's footsteps, thematizing the relation between the saint as power-broker and as power-dependent with ever more precision. It is quite another thing to look at the various authorial strategies that were used to communicate sanctity in the period of late antiquity and the early Middle Ages. The latter will be our topic here. When focusing on strategies for communicating sanctity we need to look beyond the various political or ecclesiastical decisions contextualizing the saint's actions within a fitting historical frame in an attempt to become familiar with the larger spiritual dynamic of the communities in which such ideas of sainthood actually flourished. With different Christian communities somehow 'buying into' their heroes' stories, it is no longer just the saints who play the leading role, but increasingly the authors who decided to promote them as their favourite intellectual and spiritual icons.² Since the authors of the *vitae* often played an important role in their respective communities, sometimes holding office themselves, they may be expected to unfold a particular vision in their texts as to how the earthly church should take shape as a communion of saints.

The ecclesiological agenda of the authors of these stories, then, brings us to incarnation as the underlying central theme of this article. Incarnation is the theological focal point allowing the earthly church to become infused with the grace and power of Christ, and with the invisible community of the heavenly saints as his exemplary followers. Whereas Incarnation proper refers to Christ's becoming man, in a wider sense it refers to the entering of the divine into the human that has become possible on account of Christ's Incarnation, as this event tended to blur the boundaries between the transcendent and the created. In conformity with the larger eschatological outlook of the early church, the effects of incarnation were judged to be visible not just in the collective structure of the community but also in the lives of individual saints. A particular feature of early Christian language, stretching into the early Middle Ages and colouring the saints' lives of the period as well, was that incarnation was thought to be communicable more or less directly through the 'redeemed language' with which Christians spoke to each other. By 'redeemed language' I refer to the fact that one of the consequences of the Incarnation as an outpouring of divine grace *stricto sensu* is the restoration of right speech. A reconciled community should distinguish itself through the use of reconciled or re-

a validator of religious practices, a rallying-point, a facilitator in the transition from paganism to Christianity.

² See BROWN, *Authority and the Sacred*, p. 63. As part of his revision of his earlier views Brown admits to have fallen into the trap prepared for their readers by the disciples of the holy man, i.e. the authors of the saints' lives.

deemed speech, i.e. speech that is no longer marred by miscommunication as a result of sin.³ Far from detracting from the lived experience informing the authors' literary portraits of actual saints, this observation alerts us to the fact that a substantial degree of discipline of the pen⁴ and of the imagination was involved for miracles, visions and other sensory experiences to qualify as authentic divine messages. At times, it was as if the authors deemed the miraculous aspects of their stories to be in need of pruning rather than enhancing, so as to communicate more effectively with the community, while at other times the thaumaturgical power of the saint should be stressed.⁵

I shall focus particularly on John Cassian and Gregory the Great as two key authors in the important transition from late antiquity to the early Middle Ages. While both preferred and privileged the ascetic life as the exemplary life of a Christian, they describe the presence of the invisible not through an excessive use of miracle but by craftily limning their tales with literary means as they conveyed them to their respective communities. This may explain how the ascetic life began to take on a new ambassadorial role in this transitional period. Since miracles were present anyway in late antiquity – perhaps even too many

³ For a description of redeemed language in the case of Augustine, see M.L. COLISH, *The Mirror of Language: A Study in the Medieval Theory of Knowledge*, rev. edn. (Lincoln, Neb., 1983), pp. 7-54 ("Augustine: The expression of the Word"). See pp. 25-26: "But how is it possible for men to use language as God intended? Rightly ordered speech, according to Augustine, is a consequence of the Incarnation. The key to the linguistic epistemology which he posits is Christ, whom he sees as the verbal and actual reconciliation of God and man ... The Incarnation conveys the knowledge of God to the world by communicating God himself. It also enables man to respond to God in human terms, by restoring man's words to God in Christ ... Once joined to God in Christ, human nature is restored in mind and body, and man's faculty of speech is empowered to carry on the work of Incarnation in expressing the Word to the world. For Augustine, redeemed speech becomes a mirror through which men may know God in this life by faith". Extrapolating from Augustine, I wish to argue here that through the format of the saint's life the authors of early Christian *vitae* are able to communicate with their ecclesiastical environment in theological shorthand, so to speak, as they manage to integrate love of God with admonition of the community.

⁴ See R.A. MARKUS, *The End of Ancient Christianity* (Cambridge, 1990), p. 225, where he refers to Gregory the Great and other early medieval authors in a similar vein, speaking about a "constriction of discourse" as typical of their texts.

⁵ BROWN comments on the slanted nature of saints' lives in *Authority and the Sacred*, pp. 63-64: "The *Lives* achieved their effect through censoring one side of the gift exchange that had taken place around the figure of the holy man – the steady, often disquieting flow of gifts and favours from the outside world that gave the holy man's activities an appropriate degree of splendour and public recognition. At the same time, they consistently presented the holy man's activities in terms of the other side of that gift exchange – the seemingly effortless, 'gravity-free' flow of divine favours that stemmed from his person, in the form of acts of successful arbitration, plainspeaking, cursing and intercession, on behalf of individuals or whole communities".

of them –, and their impact was by no means confined to Christianity alone, what began to matter increasingly was how to rule out the possibility of abuse. For could miracles not be told to manipulate instead of strengthening a community? In other words, the problem was how to integrate miracles responsibly with the evolving organizational structures of the Christian church.

While church structures aimed on the whole at ruling out arbitrary divine intervention, they still allowed for sufficient creative freedom on the part of Christian leaders to ‘read’ miracles empathetically in such a way as to be able both to build up the church and to criticize it if necessary. This required a strict economy of the senses and a discipline of the imagination on the part of the authors of the *vitae*. To heighten the importance of literary style and allegory involved in the effective evocation of the Christian life, I shall draw a parallel with J.M. Coetzee’s recent novel *Elizabeth Costello*, in which the author exercises a comparable hold over the senses.⁶ The parallel can admittedly only be an oblique one, as Coetzee’s novel is fiction without the historical pretense of a *vita*, although it equally aims at conveying truth realistically. Notwithstanding the clear differences of genre, the added advantage of choosing this particular novel as a point of entry is that it allows us to zoom in more on the complex notion of ‘authorship’ that is involved, as the heroine or ‘saint’ of Coetzee’s story is herself an author. As such she carries out the task of reflecting on the matter of mediating mystery and transcendence, in short, the fullness of life, more explicitly than late ancient and early medieval saints generally were able to do, caught up as they were in performing their individual acts of sanctity.

My conclusions in this article pertain to the following. For all the perceived simplicity of these saintly stories, an adequate assessment of their literary complexity is of crucial importance if we want to understand their true calling, i.e., to promote a living dialogue with their respective church communities through an effective use of language. We might even call this redeemed language. But the *vitae* did not just aim at dialogue with the church in a formal sense, for they were also – and perhaps increasingly so – directed at a wider audience. Here it becomes clear that it is not the occurrence of miracles as such but the way in which they were used that is of the essence, as their authors’ strategy in describing them can best be seen as an attempt to engage the entire world in redeemed conversation. While experiences of the invisible, both on the individual and on the collective level, form the material substrate of this conversation, I hold that its goal ultimately reached far beyond the mere wish to report such miracles adequately. Representing a particular transitional phase

⁶ See J.M. COETZEE, *Elizabeth Costello: Eight Lessons* (London, 1999, repr. 2003).

in the history of western Christianity, Cassian and Gregory aimed their literary efforts before all at the spread of Christian devotion, as manifest especially in the missionary expansion of the Christian religion. Through the telling of miracle stories, so it seems, they were able to promote the most radical and unconditional transformation of all, i.e., conversion to a universal church as part of a global Christian culture.⁷

2. Incarnation, Conversion and the Presence of the Divine

In his latest novel entitled *Elizabeth Costello*, the South African novelist and Nobel laureate J.M. Coetzee writes about a famed woman writer so called, who in many respects seems to be his *alter ego*. We follow her as she tours the lecture circuit with an aversion comparable to that for which Coetzee himself is known, as with each speaking engagement her resentment seems to grow in intensity. As she goes on a lonely crusade for the rights of animals, Ms. Costello rises to such heights in her tirade against the woes of the modern meat-packing industry, the slaughterhouses and production facilities that she takes on the quality of a modern saint. Coetzee's entire book consists of various more or less independent chapters, some of which have been published separately before, like the one on animal rights. What cements these chapters is that somehow or other they all are musings on the theme of human imagination, dwelling especially on its impressive power of psychological transportation and its general transformative quality. In the two chapters on animal rights, for example, we witness Ms. Costello giving a lecture in which she compares herself to Red Peter, a well-trained monkey from a short story by Franz Kafka who reflects on his training from ape to civilized ape, i.e., a semi-human being. In conformity with Coetzee's general allegorical approach to novel writing, she does so not just to decry the quasi-scientific behaviour of humans against Red Peter, but also to decry the social misbehaviour of humans generally. In this respect the analogy between the mistreatment of Red Peter and that of Kafka the Jew is all but obvious.⁸

⁷ See BROWN, *Authority and the Sacred*, p. 78: "By playing a role in the slow emergence of an imaginative model of the world that had a place for such wide-arching prayers, the Christian saints of late antiquity helped to make Christianity at last, and for a short moment, before the rise of Islam, the one truly universal religion of much of Europe and the Middle East".

⁸ See COETZEE, *Elizabeth Costello*, pp. 59-90 (chapter 3: "The philosophers and the animals").

The book's two final chapters are remarkable in a rather unexpected and on the whole subtler way, inasmuch as they offer us a useful entry into the problem of how to unpack the idea of sainthood. Thus these chapters lend themselves well to be used here – and to be put to the test I might add – by comparing them with some early medieval materials. The reason I find them so remarkable is that they focus on the mysterious and mystical encounter of human and divine, thus affording us an interesting parallel with the conventional notion of incarnation which was after all the tangible result of such an encounter.

In the penultimate chapter on Eros, Coetzee has his protagonist modulate from contemplating the relation of Eros and Psyche to reflecting on the experience of Anchises, the father of Aeneas, as he sleeps with the goddess Aphrodite. This is a mirror image of the story of Christ's incarnation, in the preamble of which Mary becomes impregnated by the Holy Spirit. Focusing on the story of Anchises and Aphrodite on Mount Ida, Ms. Costello wonders why Anchises kept silent about this experience, as he was ordered to do by Aphrodite the next morning. More precisely, Elizabeth Costello's puzzlement is not so much with the fact that he kept silent, but rather with his apparent selfcontrol in being able to do so. As she expresses his psychological state:

How could any of it have taken place unless he, the man, was under a spell from beginning to end, a spell like an anaesthetic to blanket the fearful knowledge that the maiden he had disrobed, embraced, parted the thighs of, penetrated, was an immortal, a trance to protect him from the unendurable pleasure of godlike love-making, allowing him only the duller sensations of a mortal? Yet why would a god, having chosen for herself a mortal lover, put that same lover under such a spell that for the duration he was not himself?⁹

The way Coetzee's female saint-cum-author speaks with critical bewilderment here about the turns of phrase and of plot found in ancient literature reminds us for a moment of the notion of *sermo humilis* introduced by Erich Auerbach more than half a century ago.¹⁰ The idea of *sermo humilis* describes Christianity as a revolutionary break with the stilted literary codes of antiquity.

⁹ See COETZEE, *Elizabeth Costello*, p. 186.

¹⁰ See E. AUERBACH, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, tr. W.R. TRASK (Princeton, 1953), pp. 50-75 ("The arrest of Peter Valvomeres"). After discussing the rhetorical styles common to antiquity, Auerbach describes how the true heart of the Christian doctrine was totally incompatible with the separation of styles, stating on p. 72 how it caused a linguistic revolution: "... a new *sermo humilis* is born, a low style, such as would properly only be applicable to comedy, but which now reaches out far beyond its original domain, and encroaches upon the deepest and the highest, the sublime and the eternal".

The effect of Auerbach's idea of *sermo humilis* was clearly to create more, and especially moral, distance between the literary values of ancient culture and those of early Christianity. Hence, Auerbach's notion might have served as an explanatory solution to the problem of inadequate sensation diagnosed by Ms. Costello in this ancient and alienating story about the coupling of God and man. After all, the various epics by Homer and Vergil represent literary norms which predate the Christian era. Yet despite a kind of brief flirtation, this is clearly not the road Ms. Costello seems to want to go down, as in the novel's account Mary's affair is not much differently described from Anchises' experience. All Mary does is to praise God ("*Magnificat Dominum anima mea*"): "this maid who is matchless, as though struck dumb for the rest of her life by what befell her".¹¹ Rather than being interested in elaborating the distance between the pagan and the Christian story by elaborating the latter's quality as *sermo humilis*, then, Ms. Costello zooms in instead on what she calls the problem of inwardness, which she considers equally present in both stories. "Can we be one with a god profoundly enough to apprehend, to get a sense of, a god's being?"¹²

In a way Ms. Costello's problem seems to be the reverse of the central puzzlement which underlies the disparate treatises of early Christian ascetic literature, including the genre of early Christian *vitae*, energizing and holding them together as their persisting pulse. Whereas Coetzee-Costello muse about whether it can ever be possible for humans to *feel* the gods, the problem behind much early Christian literature is precisely the opposite. How can belief in a god whose presence to humans is so dominant and exuberant as to have become human himself, be shared with others in an equally powerful and exclusive way? That is, without detracting from the 'present-ness' of his presence as a real and lasting experience?

In a way this problem is as old as Christianity itself, with St. Paul's well-known simile of the church as the body of Christ and Christ as its head providing a horizontal answer in terms of organizational unity and completeness.¹³ But the genealogical problem of how to protect and validate the gospel's redemptive message as being on the one hand anchored in a precise historical moment while on the other embracing an eternal truth remains. With the spread of the gospel it becomes only more acute. Starting a few generations prior to Cassian, around the time of the Nicene council in 325 CE and its aftermath, and up until the Council of Chalcedon in 451 CE, which took place just after his

¹¹ COETZEE, *Elizabeth Costello*, p. 187.

¹² COETZEE, *Elizabeth Costello*, pp. 187-188. The italics in this passage are Coetzee's.

¹³ On the analogy of Christ as the head and the church as his one body, see 1 Cor. 12, 12-31.

lifetime, partial answers to this fundamental question were given by elaborating the doctrine of the incarnation and its inevitable sequel, the theory of Christ's two natures, both human and divine. Yet it would be too simple to regard the establishment of this doctrine as thereby settling the debate.¹⁴ In fact, this was far from the case. In my view the drive to want to share the presence of the divine as a lasting experience of the invisible with others does not only lie behind the transition and concomitant translation from early Christian to medieval Christianity but is the fundamental impulse propelling the conversion of the west. As Rachel Fulton recently stated in an insightful comment on Paschasius Radbertus' eucharistic treatise *De corpore et sanguine Domini* (830-840 CE), "... his representation of the body and blood as historically present was an attempt to translate the written history of the Incarnation into a spoken history of the Word-made-flesh". It is no surprise then that she goes on to analyze this translation as necessary to aid the Saxons in their conversion to Christianity, as a monastic and didactic reply to their particular intellectual needs after they had become baptized.¹⁵

3. John Cassian (365-433 CE) and the Dissolution of Divine Presence

Representing monasticism in a period in which the matter of spiritual authority was still wide open, Cassian struggled with all the problems and complications known to have troubled and torn the ascetic movement in the early fifth century. As is made clear by Philip Rousseau, he struggled especially with the problem of how to adapt monasticism to the west and whether to stay with his preference for eremitic over coenobitic monasticism.¹⁶ This latter

¹⁴ It is interesting that in his brief analysis of Cassian's *De incarnatione* Philip Rousseau stresses the pastoral elements of this work, which was meant to refute Nestorianism. Hence it should not be seen in opposition to his more spiritual *Institutes* and *Conferences*. See P. ROUSSEAU, *Ascetics, Authority, and the Church in the Age of Jerome and Cassian* (Oxford, 1978), pp. 227-231 ("The Church as monastery: Cassian's *De Incarnatione*).

¹⁵ R. FULTON, *From Judgment to Passion: Devotion to Christ and the Virgin Mary, 800-1200* (New York, 2002), p. 16. Fulton's insight into the link between the Mass and the insistence on conversion is rather convincing, even though she does not delve into the specific content of the debate between Radbertus and Ratramnus as such. See for the latter W. OTTEN, "Between Augustinian sign and Carolingian reality: The presence of Ambrose and Augustine in the eucharistic debate between Paschasius Radbertus and Ratramnus of Corbie", *Dutch Review of Church History* 80 (2000), pp. 137-156.

¹⁶ See ROUSSEAU, *Ascetics, Authority, and the Church*, pp. 177-198. See also W. OTTEN, "Augustine on marriage, monasticism, and the community of the Church", *Theological Studies* 59 (1998), pp. 385-405, esp. pp. 391-393.

tension is actually just one of the fault-lines that can be traced in Cassian's work. Here I want to address another, one that has to do with what I called above "the lasting present-ness of the divine presence" or, to phrase it differently, with the sharing of the incarnation. As I will try to show from an example from Cassian's *Conferences*, a social piece of work after all, Cassian's stance is firmly to appreciate the immaterial (i.e., the soul) over the material (i.e., the body).¹⁷ This being so, however, his strategy in trying to achieve salvation is to envelop the reading monk in a web of material and visible clues hiding invisible truths, in order to create a "level playing field" on which the desired union of God and the (ascetic) soul can then take place. In line with the well-known fault-lines of his position, his aim may well be not to consummate this union *per se*, as this would solidify but also reify the incarnation by making it co-extensive with the life of the community itself. Rather, his aim is to hone the monks' perceptiveness so as to be able to apply it as a strategic tool for the promoting of vigilance. Kindling vigilance may well be regarded as Cassian's chief goal, as the next best thing to the lasting presence of the incarnation in the Christian church is inwardness, i.e., the experience of the divine as an abiding presence in the soul of the individual monk.

The scene I would like to highlight here is found in *Conference* 15. 10, the second conference by abba Nesteros on miraculous gifts. There he tells the following story about Paphnutius, a chaste monk who so far had always come out victorious in the struggle against demons:

One day some monks were visiting him; and while he was preparing for them the lentil porridge which they call *athera*, a flame darted out and burnt his hand while it was in the oven – it easily happens. But Paphnutius was deeply depressed, and began to consider silently in his mind thus: "Why is there not peace between me and the fire? The fiercer fighting with the demons has ceased: yet this little ephemeral fire has attacked me. What of the eternal fire on the dreadful day of judgement which searches out the good and the bad? Will it pass me over (*pertransiturus*)?" His mind was still chasing these melancholy thoughts when sleep suddenly came over him. And in his sleep, an angel of the Lord came, and said: "Why are you sad, Paphnutius? Are you sad that you are not yet at peace with the fire from the oven, while you have not yet fully purified the lusts of your body? So long as the roots of that lust dwell within you, they will not let the material fire

¹⁷ See C. STEWART, *Cassian the Monk* (Oxford, 1998), pp. 62-84 (Chapter 4: "Flesh and spirit, continence and chastity"). But see also MARKUS, *The End of Ancient Christianity*, pp. 157-197 at pp. 184-185 on Cassian's new incorporation of both the active (Greek: *praktike*) and the contemplative (Greek: *theoretike*) as forms of a practicable, communal monasticism. This is in contrast to Evagrius' sharp distinction of these terms.

be at peace with you. You will not feel it at peace with you unless you make the following experiment to prove that all lust is extinct. Go, lay hold upon a fair maiden. And if your heart remains tranquil, and your bodily senses serene, this fire in the oven will be harmless and gentle to you as it was to the three children in the burning fiery furnace at Babylon". Old Paphnutius was struck by the vision, and did not risk the experiment which God had suggested, he guessed that his chastity might not stand the test. Instead, he examined his conscience, and investigated the purity of his heart. "It is not then surprising", he said, "that I feel the fire to be still hostile to me though I have conquered unclean devils and believe the fire's onslaught to be far more trivial than those of the demons. It is a greater gift to kill lust within than to drive the devils without by the Lord's high power and invocation of his name".¹⁸

¹⁸ See Johannes Cassianus, *Conlationes*, xv. 10 ("De charismatibus diuinis"), ed. M. PETSCHENIG (Vindobonae, 1886: CSEL 13), pp. 435-436: "Et ut hoc ipsum quod diximus uel testimoniiis ueterum uel diuinis oraculis adprobemus, quid beatus Paphnutius uel de admiratione signorum uel de gratia senserit puritatis, immo quid angeli reuelatione cognouerit, ipsius uerbis atque experimentis rectius proferemus. Hic namque ita multis uigens annis distractione praecipua, ut crederet se etiam carnalis concupiscentiae laqueis penitus absolutum, eo quod cunctis infestationibus daemonum quibus diu aperteque conflixerat Superiorem se esse factum sentiret, dum aduenientibus uiris sanctis pulmentum lenticulae, quod illi atheran nominant, praepararet, manus eius, ut adsolet, in clibano flamma superuolitante combusta est. Quo facto tristificatus magnum in modum coepit secum tacitus uoluere, cur ignis, inquiens, mecum non habet pacem, cum diriora mihi daemonum cesserint proelia? Aut quemadmodum me in illo metuendo examinis die pertransiturus ille ignis inextinguibilis et inquisitor meritorum omnium non tenebit, cui nunc extrinsecus hic temporalis ac paruulus non pepercit? Cumque aestuanti huiusmodi cogitationibus atque tristitia sopor subitus obrepisset, adueniens angelus domini, cur, inquit, Paphnuti, tristis es, quod necdum tibi pacatus sit ignis iste terrenus, cum adhuc resideat in membris tuis carnalium motuum necdum ad purum excocta commotio? Cuius radices donec in tuis uiuunt medullis, ignem istum materiale nequaquam tibi pacificum esse permittent, quem utique innoxium alias sentire non poteris, nisi omnes internos motus his indicibus in temet ipso experiaris extinctos: uade, adprehende nudam et pulcherrimam uirginem, et si illam tenens tranquillitatem tui cordis immobilem aestusque carnales pacificos in te senseris perdurasse, huius quoque uisibilis flammae mitis atque innoxius in modum illorum trium in Babylonia puerorum te adlambet adtactus. Itaque senex huiusmodi reuelatione percussus non quidem experimenti diuinitus demonstrati pericla consuluit, sed interrogans conscientiam suam et puritatem sui cordis examinans nec adhuc pondus castimoniae suae huius probationis ponderi compensare coniectans, non mirum est, ait, si cedentibus mihi immundorum spirituum proeliis adustiones ignis, quas dirissimis congressibus daemonum inferiores esse credebam, adhuc aduersum me senserim saeuientes. Maior quippe est uirtus ac sublimior gratia internam libidinem carnis extinguere quam nequitias daemonum extrinsecus inruentes signo domini ac uirtutis altissimae potentia subiugare uel de obsessis corporibus nominis diuini inuocatione propellere". The translation is taken from O. CHADWICK, *Western Asceticism: Selected Translations and Notes* (Philadelphia, 1958), p. 263.

What strikes me as most remarkable in this story is the transition whereby the fire switches roles. From a trivial physical sign it first changes into a meaningful spiritual warning sign indicating the lustful state of the soul, as we notice how the fire of the oven is set against the eschatological background of the last judgment. Yet it then changes again – through the mediation of the angel – into the loving fiery embrace that once enveloped and protected Daniel and his companions. The implicit message of this entire passage, even though it is never spelled out as such by Cassian, is that passions can be domesticated just like the fire can.

What is significant, and in my opinion quite typical of Cassian's idea of ascetic growth, is that all this is apparently told to Paphnutius in his sleep, as he experiences the vision of an angel. Thus the scene takes place mostly on the level of the imagination, and there is no actual fire, neither that of the last judgment nor that of Daniel in the oven, other than the fire of the domestic incident which set all this in motion. In the same way, the experiment suggested to the monk by God (viz. to fetch himself a girl) to test his spiritual progress is never carried out. Still, while Paphnutius no longer sees the fire after his hand is first burned, the image of its hostility subconsciously lingers in the reader's mind. It is as if the initial incident through Cassian's literary talents results in a kind of wrap-around sound effect of divine presence, more specifically, of imminent divine judgment, thereby bringing on the desired effect of the monk's unremitting vigilance and discretion.¹⁹

While it is through the subtle accumulation of small incidents that Cassian's story first lodges the idea of a lasting divine presence in the monk's soul, the presence of the divine dissolves again like the apparition of a spectre upon awakening from a dream when one has finished the story. After all, if we take away the dream and the vision, all that is really left after reading the story is the fire in Paphnutius' oven. With this fire he has to make his peace. Whether he does so by subduing his temptations or by handling the oven more carefully is to a certain extent indifferent to the effective unfolding of Cassian's vignette-like story. Therein lies to my mind precisely its strength.

From the above it becomes clear that Cassian provides us with a view of how to instruct a monastic audience in the ascetic life which centres on the training of the monk's personal discretion. It is no surprise that this happens in and throughout his *Collationes*, as this text shows us how he goes about mustering the authority of God's oracles and collecting ancient evidence. Cassian's

¹⁹ This squares with Rousseau's idea of Cassian's writing as a more enduring form of spiritual instruction compared to the living and oral wisdom tradition of the desert monks. See ROUSSEAU, *Ascetics, Authority, and the Church*, p. 224.

method of exposition, in other words, is bundling together isolated anecdotes. The fact that he collects them indicates that somehow he feels the need to build a community of individuals which is based on a common “genealogy of ascetic morals” and wrapped in a state of collective vigilance, that is, a permanent and immanent awareness of the presence of the divine. I will come back to the specific meaning that he thus attributes to the sensual and the visible in my conclusion.

4. Gregory the Great (540-604 CE) and the Incorporation of Divine Presence

While Cassian belongs in part to an earlier era, with Gregory the Great it seems that we have definitely turned the page from early Christianity to the Middle Ages, or from ascetic growth to conversion, in the way we saw conversion described by Rachel Fulton. Accordingly, the famous stories in his *Dialogues* show us a much more telekinetic view of the ascetic life, including a concomitant emphasis on its miraculous aspects. The wrap-around sound effect accomplished by Paphnutius’ imagination in what turned out in the end to have been a mere vision of the angel in his sleep, is now replaced by the real life appearances of angels as well as of other men.

While this may strike us as the triumph of the visual over the literary, the following text may give us pause and make us take another look at Gregory’s special effects, with their fluid line between imagination and reality. The passage is found in *Dialogues* II. 10:

Then the man of God decided to have the monks dig the earth in that same spot. While doing so and reaching far down, they found a bronze idol there. When they had temporarily thrown it into the kitchen, fire suddenly seemed to pour out and made it appear to the monks that the whole building containing the kitchen was being destroyed. Since they were creating an uproar by throwing water as though to extinguish the fire, Benedict was aroused by the confusion and went to them. He saw that the fire was visible to their eyes but not to his, and so he bent his head in prayer at once. In this way he restored sound sight to the brothers he had found deceived by the imaginary fire. They realized then that the building containing the kitchen was still standing undamaged, and they no longer saw the flames which the Devil had fashioned.²⁰

²⁰ See Gregorius Magnus, *Dialogi*, II. 10, ed. A. DE VOGÜÉ (Paris, 1979: SC 260), pp. 170-172: “Tunc in conspectu uiri Dei placuit ut in loco eodem terram foderent. Quam dum fodiendo altius penetraret, aereum illic idolum fratres inuenerunt. Quo ad horam casu in coquina

What we see here is the potentially destructive effect of illusory fire, whose most harmful consequence is the wreaking of spiritual havoc, even if it is couched in physical terms. As the *inclusio* of the little emblematic story illustrates, the appearance of this illusory fire is linked to the finding of a bronze idol mentioned at the beginning. This little literary signal is apparently enough to make Gregory's readers consider this fire the result of idolatry. In the end we see the saint setting things straight again by restoring sound sight. As a result of this the flames "that the Devil had fashioned", which were exuding a deceptive and phantasmagoric reality, now disappear.

The effect of Gregory's story on his readers is that he lifts them to a new level of language, as they now find themselves hovering between heaven and earth, between the imagined harm of false flames and the real harm of deluded monks. Interestingly enough, this set of bipolar contrasts is 'resolved' not through the establishment of some kind of a balance, as in Cassian's concept of monastic vigilance, but by their absorption – or perhaps we should rather say their 'incorporation' – in the presence of a saintly figure whose only miracle is a counter-miracle. He restored sound sight.²¹

In the end this means that the story can only have been written from the perspective of sound sight, to the extent that only after the fact (and after the fire) can it be concluded that there was no real fire. The saint's exertion of authority here ultimately rests on the fact that he is apparently able to represent two levels of experience at the same time. In the above story Benedict is able to combine the experience of diabolical delusion, as he realizes how the monks' bodily eyes are misguided, and that of saintly sobriety, as he restores them to sound sight, into one integrated reality. Much of the suspense of the *Dialogues* seems to consist in the fact that the readers do not know in advance which ex-

proiecto, exire ignis repente uisus est, atque in cunctorum monachorum oculis, quia omne eiusdem coquinae aedificium consumeretur, ostendit. (2) Cumque iaciendo aquam et ignem quasi extinguendo perstreperent, pulsatus eodem tumultu uir Domini aduenit. Qui eundem ignem in oculis fratrum esse, in suis uero non esse considerans, caput protinus in orationem flexit, et eos quos phantastico repperit igne deludi, reuocauit fratres ad oculos suos, ut et sanum illud coquinae aedificium adsistere cernerent, et flammam, quas antiquus hostis finxerat, non uiderent". The translation is taken from *Gregory the Great, Dialogues, Book II: Saint Benedict*, tr. M.L. UHLFELDER (New York, 1967), p. 19.

²¹ On the role of the saint in Gregory, see C. STRAW, *Gregory the Great: Perfection in Imperfection* (Berkeley, 1988), pp. 66-89. Despite the common observation of a discrepancy between the *Dialogues* and Gregory's other works such as the *Moralia in Job* or the *Regula Pastoralis*, Straw warns against seeing too much of a gap. As she states on p. 69: "In sum, Gregory's affirmation of the miraculous is thorough but restrained. He remains the pastor whose primary concern is the spiritual reform of his audience". See also R.A. MARKUS, *Gregory the Great and His World* (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 51-67.

perience best approximates the actual reality of daily phenomena. By restoring sound sight as an explicit manifestation of his power the saint begins to serve as a beacon of light, allowing his followers to disentangle the jumble of these different experiential strata without forcing them to give priority to one over the other. For them, as for Gregory's readers, it is sufficient just to follow Benedict as their leader and spiritual counsellor, their guiding light. The saint's power to overcome the potential harmful effect of a gnostic dichotomy rests ultimately on his proper embodiment and appropriation of the incarnation, as a result of which it seems that the inwardness of humility can manifest itself outwardly in the guise of the saint's discretionary powers of perception.²²

Be that as it may, Gregory also has other stories going more directly in the direction of physical display of power over life and death.²³ The following story is found in *Dialogues* II. 24:

There was a youthful monk who loved his parents too much. One day, after leaving the monastery without a blessing, he made his way to their house and died the same day as soon as he had arrived. The day after his interment, his body was found cast out, and was buried again. But the following day it was again found cast out and disinterred as before. Then the youth's relatives ran fast to Benedict and, in tears, they begged him to grant favour to the youth. At once the man of God gave them a consecrated wafer of the Lord's body (*communione corporis dominici*) and said, "Go and put this consecrated wafer (*hoc corpus dominicum*) on his breast and bury him that way". When this had been done, the earth received his body and kept it, and did not cast it out again. You can realize, Peter, how much merit Benedict had in the eyes of the Lord Jesus Christ since even the earth cast out the body of the monk who lacked his blessing.

Peter. I am weighing the incident carefully, and it really astonishes me.²⁴

²² See C. STRAW, *Gregory the Great*, p. 68, on the priority of inwardness: "The *Dialogues* present continually a distinction between external and internal virtues, as Gregory strives to lead his audience inward. Chastity and abstinence are external signs just as those more wondrous feats, such as suspending a stone in mid-air or multiplying loaves of bread. Both kinds of deeds are external phenomena set in contrast to internal charity".

²³ This generally corresponds with the transition described by MARKUS, *The End of Ancient Christianity*, pp. 213-228 at p. 222: "In Western Europe the late sixth century marks a real break with the world of antiquity, closed off access to much of its intellectual culture, and even more drastically, to its ways of looking at, understanding and speaking about that world".

²⁴ Gregorius Magnus, *Dialogi* II. XXIV, ed. DE VOGÜÉ, pp. 210-212: "Gregorius: *Quadam quoque die, dum quidam eius puerulus monachus, parentes suos ultra quam debebat diligens atque ad eorum habituculum tendens, sine benedictione de monasterio exisset, eodem die, mox ut ad eos peruenit, defunctus est. Cumque esset sepultus, die altero proiectum foras corpus eius inuentum est. Quod rursus tradere sepulturae curauerunt, sed sequenti die iterum proiectum exterius atque inhumatum sicut prius inuenerunt. Tunc concite ad Benedicti patris uestigia*

In this story the saint comes on the scene as a veritable power-broker. It appears that the sole reason why the earth cast out the body of the monk is because the dead boy lacked the saint's blessing, at least so the moral of the story is spelled out to Peter. However true this judgment may be, again it is a judgment after the fact, for it is not all that clear from the way the story unfolds. The actual order of the narrative appears to be different. Due to the young monk's disobedience the earth refuses to bury the dead boy and coughs him up until the saint's gesture of penance, the consecrated wafer, is put upon his breast. After this the earth proves ready to receive the dead boy's body, much as the dead monk had received the consecrated wafer just before. It is as if the saint no longer performs the miracle all by himself,²⁵ as a solipsistic rallying-point of heaven and earth. Instead his 'live' representation of the incarnation seeks institutional validation by attuning itself with the larger movement of the church's liturgy, oriented as it is towards life in God. It is, in other words, as if the wafer functions as a reified sign of the incarnation aiding and supporting the saint in his saintly actions.

In a reverse analogy to a resurrection story, which one might perhaps have more likely expected from a saint, the true miracle here is the fact that Benedict stops the repetition of an unwelcome one. Rather than performing a magical trick like a conventional shaman, all that Benedict does is to halt the harmful miracle of the earth spitting out the dead. Apparently for Gregory, whose world view proves substantially different from Cassian's on this point, the experience of reality has become so ambiguous and mysterious, so fraught with miracles without apparent structure or order that the model of the saint as a mere wonder-doer is no longer satisfactory. Lifted out of the well-defined setting of an ascetic community and set against a worldly background marked by a cascade of miracles, not even the saint is able to predict any longer which miracles are the true ones and why.²⁶ Instead, his role turns into what can best be

currentes, cum magno fletu petierunt, ut ei suam gratiam largiri dignaretur. Quibus uir Dei manu sua protinus communionem dominici corporis dedit, dicens: 'Ite, atque hoc dominicum corpus super pectus eius ponite, eumque sepulturae sic tradite'. Quod cum factum fuisset, susceptum corpus eius terra tenuit nec ultra proiecit. Perpendis, Petre, apud Iesum Christum Dominum cuius meriti iste uir fuerit, ut eius corpus etiam terra proiecerit, qui Benedici gratiam non haberet. Petrus: Perpendo plane et uehementer stupeo''.

²⁵ Another example from the *Dialogues* plays down Gregory's thaumaturgical powers by stressing his humility. In *Dialogues* II. 7, Gregory tells the story of his pupil Maurus who ran so fast to save a boy about to be drowned that he walked on water. While Maurus says that the saint gave him this power, Benedict holds that it was merely due to Maurus' obedience. The saved boy then brings clarity as he was lifted out of the water seeing the abbot's cowl.

²⁶ In Gregory's *Dialogues* the saint is not always in command. For an example, see *Dialogues* II. 33, where the prayers of Benedict's sister Scholastica are answered and he is forced

described as that of a sane actor in a world of lost magic. If anything, it is the combined image of sanctity and sanity that Gregory wants to project. It can aid him in furthering conversion with a side-glance to serving the church in obedience, even if his primary motive may no longer be to stimulate ascetic growth.

5. Conclusion: Representing Incarnation

Back to Coetzee's *Elizabeth Costello* and the problem of the fleeting meeting of humans and gods or, to put it in early Christian terms, of the question how to hold on to the reality of incarnation, the present-ness of divine presence. As Marcia Colish has demonstrated in her *Mirror of Language*, the problem of the incarnation for Christian rhetoric was how to create a language that had been imbued or imbibed with the incarnation in such a way that it could indeed function as a 'redeemed' and transformed language. This was after all the consequence of the fact that the Word had become Flesh, and in a wider sense, the consequence of the fact that God had decided to grace the material and created world with his presence. Similarly, I would argue that in the world of late antiquity the incarnation also led to a re-calibration of the use and abuse of the senses.²⁷ Rather than playing up the old antithesis between classical and Christian experiences of material reality, we should try and see concretely how various Christian saints, profiled by Christian authors, were using the realm of the senses alongside that of words to communicate the message of incarnation to their audience. However one may evaluate Cassian and Gregory on this point, the realm of the senses is clearly something that can be toyed with and requires constant reinterpretation. As the respective cases of Paphnutius burning his hand in Cassian, of Benedict's monks intimidated by an illusory fire, and of the earth spitting out a body in Gregory collectively show, material reality harbours powers that are far more dynamic than is apparent at first sight. As the realm of the senses needs to be controlled by the saint, sense experience entails

to stay the night due to a thunderstorm. This is the story to which Gregory referred earlier, so he tells us, by saying that the saint had had a wish that he could not fulfil.

²⁷ See above, n. 3. See also COLISH, *The Mirror of Language*, pp. 25-26: "In Christ, says Augustine, God speaks to man as man, "proclaiming aloud by words", through the sensible, temporal media of his life, deeds, death, descent, and ascension. The Incarnation conveys the knowledge of God in human terms, by restoring man's words to God in Christ". Here I want to draw attention to the relationship between right speech and right, i.e., non-magical, use of the senses, as it is Christ's entire life that speaks to us and saints can be seen as his followers.

far more than a passive vehicle, as it can itself become the domain of incarnation.

Here Cassian and Gregory reveal rather different ascetic strategies. Beside nuancing existing functionalist approaches to the role of the saint along the lines of Brown and others, these different strategies may yield valuable information about the saint's powers of discretion and his capacity to bring about conversion. While Cassian indulges in a more exuberant use of the senses, starting with an observation about reality only to have his imagination take off from there and set out on its own saintly course, in Gregory the effect is different. Rather than allowing a phantasmagoric transformation of the senses, Gregory reduces them to their normal effects, even if their normality transcends the ordinary law of sense experience in being ultimately redemptive.

What is especially unique in the last story in relation to the meaning of the incarnation is that the narrative of redemption is so compelling that it culminates in the fixed rhythms of a liturgy, as any good conversion scene should do. The order with which Benedict tells the parents to put the consecrated wafer on the dead boy's breast reminds one of the words of institution at the Eucharist. In Gregory's allegorical tale, there are actually two levels of reality – that of the family narrative and the tale of monastic obedience put to universal use – which each follow their own course until they come together in the boy's final rest. Rather than a reverse resurrection story based on the fact that it ends with death rather than life, the story takes us in a direction that is altogether different, as it reveals a new allegorical quality. Apparently, Gregory's aim is not to tell his readers yet another miraculous tale, but to demonstrate the entire complexity of communicating the miracle of Christian redemption in a nutshell, i.e., in the shape of a single tale. He does so by showing them how it is the present-ness of the divine, itself invisible, which determines the concrete fate of the individual rather than his or her personal actions. In this allegorical tale collapsing the aspects of incarnation and redemption, the earth first delivers a message of rejection by spitting out the dead boy's body only later to redeem him by accepting it. Thus we see how the gratuitous loss of a boy's life can finally become a respectful sacrifice for God.²⁸ With the ordinary rhythm of life and death initially brought to a standstill, through the earth's refusal to accept the boy for burial, the intervention of the saint marks a turning-point, as the liturgical slowly begins to invade the real. In the end the wafer rather than the live actions of the saint is what puts the boy to rest, after which the earth merely follows suit.

²⁸ On the unity of incarnation and redemption, see STRAW, *Gregory the Great*, pp. 162-178.

We are still far from the grammatical and semantic confusion that orders about the consecrated wafer, or *corpus dominicum*, would cause in the age of Berengar of Tours. Yet we are close to the mentality of Paschasius Radbertus here whose amended edition of his *De corpore et sanguine Domini* included miracle stories from the *Vitae Patrum*.²⁹ While it may be tempting to see this inclusion as an enhancement of the magical in Paschasius, and hence of a kind of degeneracy of grace-filled liturgy into the mere folklore of magic by contiguity, it seems more likely that for him, just as for Gregory, the reception of such miracles inside the ecclesial community underscored the link between incarnation and eucharist.³⁰ As a soothing result, in Gregory the consecrated wafer does not need to accomplish either an act of resurrection or of re-creation but 'only' of burial. With the belief in the incarnation firmly established and solidified in the wafer, all the earth should do is execute its 'redeemed' role in creation of absorbing the dead and giving them rest.

Rest, finally, is what Coetzee's heroine Elizabeth Costello somehow does not seem to find, as she remains too aware of her authorial persona. The last chapter of Coetzee's novel entitled "At the gate" shows us how Elizabeth, put in some sort of camp which seems the equivalent of limbo, is interrogated about her life and forced to write a statement of belief, without knowing if and when she will be admitted to the area beyond the gate. She knows not even whether this area beyond the gate is heaven or not. At one point she makes a remarkable statement, an implicit confession rather, which may be connected to the above story from Gregory. More generally, this semi-confession can be profitably transferred to the familiar yet new mentality of the early Middle Ages: "Is that what we are, all of us: petitioners awaiting our respective judgements?"³¹

No doubt Cassian, but especially Gregory would have agreed with her. Yet where they as Christian writers of a much earlier age differ from this old woman writer calling herself a secretary of the invisible, is in their confident

²⁹ See Paschasius Radbertus, *De corpore et sanguine Domini*, c. XIV, ed. B. PAULUS (Turnhout, 1969: CCCM 16), pp. 88-89. See also OTTEN, "Between Augustinian sign and Carolingian reality", p. 154.

³⁰ In all this the textual aspect of the *Dialogi* should be strongly kept in mind. See J.J. O'DONNELL, "The holiness of Gregory", in: *Gregory the Great: A Symposium*, ed. J.C. CAVADINI (Notre Dame, 1995), pp. 62-81 at p. 71: "... the *Dialogi* compel the reader to leave the four walls, the altar and the liturgy, at least in imagination; to encounter the bishop, pope, and minister of the Eucharist in a very different setting; and then to acquire what he has to teach through the special kind of skill that goes with reading a written text". As this passage makes clear, conversion for Gregory means especially a deepening of the faith, a growth toward greater interiority, for the achievement of which reading appears to be of the essence.

³¹ COETZEE, *Elizabeth Costello*, p. 208.

optimism that accessing and describing the reality of incarnation is possible. Living out of their firm belief in incarnation, these authors were somehow convinced that the saint would faithfully communicate the invisibility of the divine to his followers, thereby imparting his lasting grace. Whether he did so by innocently evoking God's presence through life's little signals like the burning of a hand, as in Cassian, or by embodying the reality of the incarnation wholesale, as in Gregory's complex stories about Benedict, makes little difference. In a move back from the visible to the evocative and the literary, in the end it is the power of the authors' tales, more than the experiences behind them, which proved indispensable in displaying and conveying this optimism. All these authors wanted to do – and succeeded in doing – by telling their stories was to give their readers some hope that, given the right intercessors and a willing God, even in this life some petitions may be granted.

Visibility and (Partial) Invisibility of Early Christian Images

BEAT BRENK

*Namque pictura imago fit eius, quod est seu potest esse ...*¹

*Voluptas oculorum varia est et multiplex*²

The issue of the invisibility or visibility of images, in my opinion, belongs to that type of fashionable problem which appears on the firmament of scholarship much like a meteorite, only to disappear into total oblivion after a flash of brilliance. I believe that in the case of the early Christian image, visibility is not due to mere coincidence; it is a result of the focus on the viewer's reception of the image. This was the essence of the discourse concerning the aesthetics of reception which began during the nineteen seventies.³ The archaeologist is much more sceptical of the aesthetics of reception than the art historian. This becomes obvious when considering the impossibility for the archaeologist to reconstruct the original context and position of an image to answer how it could have affected its viewer.

At first glance, the issue of the effect of the image on its viewer seems to be of disarming banality. This is especially true when we consider the metopes of

¹ Vitruvius, *De architectura*, VII. 5. 1.

² Lactantius, *Inst.*, 6. 20.

³ W. KEMP, *Der Anteil des Betrachters: Rezeptionsästhetische Studien zur Malerei des 19. Jh.* (München, 1983); *Der Betrachter ist im Bild: Kunstwissenschaft und Rezeptionsästhetik*, ed. W. KEMP, 2nd edn. (Köln, 1992).

the Greek temples versus the frescoes in Pompeii. The Parthenon's metopes are located – as almost all architectural decoration of the Greek and Roman period – at such a height that the visibility of the reliefs for the viewer is greatly restricted. But the frescoes in Pompeii – as nearly all the frescoes in Roman houses – were painted at eye level for maximum visibility. Possible exceptions to this rule in Pompeii are the erotic frescoes: accessible today to the tourist who tips the guide to open the rooms with the salacious frescoes. But to whom were the frescoes visible to in the past? To the aristocratic owner of the house or to his kitchen staff? I leave it to others to find a convincing answer to this question.⁴

The issue of visibility in today's art history has acquired less importance than it had in the recent past. The earlier protagonists of art historical method were history of style, iconography and the search for models and influences. But today, these have been pushed off stage – without having been given the chance to play their role to its completion – by the latest star of method, the image. After generations of art historians had tried meticulously to reconstruct the context surrounding it, today, the image is amputated from its context to stand in splendid – though incomplete – isolation. This is especially true in German scholarship where a cult of the image has arisen which is appropriately enough called 'iconics'. In this cult, the art historian is the high priest. He or she is the 'work of art' and, as such, does not need to tread the thorny path of context nor do his or her profound sermons require its unwieldy encumbrance. I, personally, prefer not to consider the image this way. I see the work of art as the result of an artist's unexpected ideas and imagination and I want to know more about the historical and archaeological context which nurtured it. My point of departure is the column of Trajan in Rome (Fig. 1). There has been much scholarly debate, by prominent authors, about the invisibility of the column's images. In fact, only about a quarter of the column's images can be easily seen – the four bottom spirals – while the images higher up are never completely visible. The obvious question is: why would the patron of this column produce so many images about the Dacian war – and with such love of detail – when more than half the reliefs are barely visible? Wherein lies the sense of such a concept? Salvatore Settis wrote a monograph of the column of Trajan in 1988, in which he provided a wide ranging, analytical spectrum that included the patron and the viewer and in which he dedicated an entire paragraph to the viewer. In his monograph, Settis observed that the Forum of Trajan

⁴ W. V. HARRIS, "Literacy and epigraphy I", *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 52 (1983), p. 104; K.-W. WEEBER, *Die Schwelgerei, das süsse Gift ...: Luxus im alten Rom* (Darmstadt, 2003), pp. 73-88.

was the only forum to have been built as a consequence of a war of conquest and its purpose was to glorify, in detail, the victory of the Romans over the Dacians.⁵ The column, itself, in its entirety, was to celebrate the Trajanic military policy by immortalizing and summarizing the success of the emperor and his troops in Dacia in the form of a short image story.⁶ The column was flanked by two libraries north of the Basilica Ulpia, which held the archives of the wars, the archive of the praetorian decrees, and, particularly, the imperial archive (Fig. 2). Behind each library, two stairways led up to the second register of the wall-decoration with niches and from there to the roofs of the library and of the Basilica Ulpia.⁷ Settis thought that the visibility of the reliefs of the bottom spirals of the column was guaranteed by these stairways.

The historian Paul Veyne did not agree with this interpretation at all. He thought that the visibility of the reliefs on the column of Trajan was absolutely unimportant. He said: “l’effet global suffisait”⁸ and went so far as to state that the lofty height of the spiral column was to discourage the viewer from looking any further.⁹ He even spoke of an “indifférence pour la visibilité”¹⁰ and claimed that the significance of the column was not imperial propaganda but, rather, “grandeur monarchique”. Salvatore Settis calmly answered this radical critique insisting on the point that the two libraries flanking the column of Trajan had two stories making a large part of the reliefs visible from the library windows¹¹ and also afforded visibility from the stairways; and he maintained that the story in pictures on the column exactly corresponded to the written reports of the imperial war preserved in the libraries. Settis, however, also believed that the objective documentation of the Dacian war, and not its visibility, was the decisive factor. He stressed that the primary focus was the documentary character of the reliefs. The first four spirals were easily visible from ground level and, in fact, they have been sketched from the fifteenth century onwards.

⁵ A. LA REGINA, “Le guerre daciche, Roma, il foro”, in: *La Colonna Traiana*, ed. S. SETTIS (Torino, 1988), p. 39.

⁶ S. SETTIS, “La colonna”, in: *La Colonna Traiana*, p. 107.

⁷ LA REGINA, “Le guerre daciche”, p. 42; J.E. PACKER and J. BURGE, “*Templum Divi Traiani Parthici et Plotinae*: A debate with R. Meneghini”, *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 16 (2003), pp. 109-136.

⁸ P. VEYNE, “Lisibilité des images, propagande et apparat monarchique dans l’Empire Romain”, *Revue Historique* 304 (2001), pp. 3-29, particularly p. 4; Paul Veyne published his arguments against Settis for the first time in a paper called: “Conduites sans croyances et oeuvres d’art sans spectateurs”, *Diogenes* 142 (1988) pp. 3-22; see also: ID., *La société romaine* (Paris, 1991) pp. 311-342.

⁹ VEYNE, “Lisibilité des images”, p. 6.

¹⁰ VEYNE, “Lisibilité des images”, p. 9.

¹¹ S. SETTIS, *La colonna Traiane: L’imperatore et son public* (Brussels, 1990).

I believe that the first quarter of the column serves as an invitation beckoning the viewer to make the effort to follow the narrative to its end.¹² If the frieze were to be laid flat, it would be 200 meters long. In it, Trajan is represented sixty times. It almost seems as if he had won the Dacian war all alone, which was not the case at all! He is really visible, however, only 15 times. On top of the column stood the monumental bronze statue of the emperor. The visibility factor considerably irritates the modern viewer, so keen on images and so intent on deciphering their deep and complicated meaning. She or he feels frustrated because more than half of these cleverly planned and finely arranged reliefs are almost invisible. Tonio Hölscher¹³ pointed out that the presence of the two libraries on the right and left hand side of the column of Trajan (Fig. 2) does not help much to make the frieze of reliefs easier to see because the upper floors of these libraries would not usually have been accessible and, anyway, nobody could really walk around the column on the level of the four bottom spirals. There is consequently no conclusive and convincing answer to the question of the invisibility of most of the reliefs.

I really do not think that the Trajan column should be seen as a mere text. It is first of all a work of art with outstanding reliefs and the product of very high artistic ambition. Here, we see a magnificent artistic and rhetorical display of the highest quality resulting from imperial patronage and an unlimited budget. Imperial rhetoric was strikingly apparent not only because of the enormous size of the monument and its opulence but also because of the variety and high value of the building materials used, the wide range of decorative forms, the abundance of images and the high ambition of artistic form and design. Abundance is also expressed in the redundancy of the figure of Trajan. All these components made it very clear to the viewer that he stood before an imperial monument.¹⁴ He was well aware of the differences between private and

¹² SETTIS, "La colonne Trajane", p. 190; see also ID., "Die Trajanssäule, der Kaiser und sein Publikum", in: *Die Lesbarkeit der Kunst: Zur Geistes-Gegenwart der Ikonologie*, ed. A. BEYER (Berlin, 1992) pp. 40-52.

¹³ L.E. BAUMER, T. HÖLSCHER and L. WINKLER, "Narrative Systematik und politisches Konzept in den Reliefs der Traianssäule: Drei Fallstudien", *Jahrbuch des deutschen archäologischen Institutes* 106 (1991), pp. 261-295, particularly p. 262: "Dass ein antiker Betrachter die Szenenfolge ablesen konnte, ist undenkbar, alle Erklärungen in dieser Richtung sind verzweifelte Ausflüchte"; T. HÖLSCHER, "Die Geschichtsauffassung in der römischen Repräsentationskunst", *Jahrbuch des deutschen archäologischen Institutes* 95 (1980), pp. 265-321.

¹⁴ The 'rhetoric of architectural luxury' discussed here arose during the first century BC, and became authoritative only from the reign of Augustus onwards. It evolved first within the architecture of the private house and villa, then within the architecture of temples, and from the first century AD onwards also within the realm of the imperial palace architecture. The 'topos'

imperial monuments in Rome and he fully understood the rhetoric expressed. The reliefs on the Trajan Column were not the only source of information about the wars leading to the conquest of Dacia, nor was this their task because a rich oral and written tradition had already been intertwined around these wars. The purpose of the reliefs was to fix the specific *memoria* about these battles in marble for all eternity in accordance to Trajan's desires. The extent of the visibility of the reliefs was not an important issue in imperial rhetoric and aesthetic objectives.¹⁵ This, however, does not at all mean that the content of the single reliefs was indifferent. Even though not all reliefs could be seen, the whole cycle revealed an elaborate concept of the sort that Settis and Hölscher, in particular, have worked out. The *raison d'être* of the column of Trajan lies not only in an exact report of the single battles, conquests and victories, but also in the manifestation of imperial rhetoric and *Magnificencia*. To recognize imperial *Magnificencia*, there was no need for the viewer to 'read' the whole cycle of reliefs; he only needed to open his eyes! Those who wanted to look closer, however, could easily discern the *pietas Augusti*, the many *adlocutiones* of the emperor in front of his troops, the *fides exercitus* and, finally, the victorious battles, demonstrating the Roman *virtus*.¹⁶

All this is also true for the arch of Constantine in Rome,¹⁷ which abounds in images (Fig. 3). Here the Hadrianic *tondi* were reworked and updated so that they came to portray the currently governing Constantine and later Licinius, instead of Hadrian (Fig. 4). This was a difficult and very expensive task which required a highly skilled artist. The fact that these outstanding, reworked portraits were not visible from the ground is solely a problem for today's viewer because the aesthetic objective of imperial art was to show the emperor's wealth

of outdoing the forerunners (and the contemporaries) was so to speak the motor for a continuous change of values, reflected sometimes in Roman literature (e.g. Pliny, HN, XXXIV. 9, 12, 18; *Historia Augusta*, Gallieni duo, XVIII). One of the few authors who has dealt with the problem of growing luxury is P. FRIEDLÄNDER, *Darstellungen aus der Sittengeschichte Roms*, 10th edn., 4 vols. (Leipzig, 1922), 2, pp. 266-383, but still lacking is an analysis of the rhetoric of architecture with special regard to the social status of the patrons and to the choice of styles. For the classical period see, e.g. P. GROS, "La sémantique des ordres à la fin de l'époque hellénistique et au début de l'empire: Remarques préliminaires", in: *Studi archeologici in onore di A. Frova*, ed. G. CAVALIERI MANASSE and E. ROFFIA (Roma, 1995), pp. 23-32.

¹⁵ P. VEYNE speaks of "apparat monarchique", though without going deeper into the problem of aesthetics ("Lisibilité des images", pp. 3-29).

¹⁶ BAUMER, HÖLSCHER and WINKLER, "Narrative Systematik", pp. 261-295.

¹⁷ P. PENSABENE and C. PANELLA, *Arco di Costantino tra archeologia e archeometria* (Roma, 1998); H.P. L'ORANGE and A. VON GERKAN, *Der spätantike Bildschmuck des Konstantinsbogens* (Berlin, 1939); B. BRENK, "Spolia from Constantine to Charlemagne: Aesthetics versus ideology", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 41 (1987) pp. 103-109.

and greatness. It was of less importance to provide public enjoyment through visibility than it was to engender public awe through magnificence. Imperial art was a statement that said that the emperor had such great means at his disposal that he could afford to decorate his buildings opulently with works of art even when they could only partially be seen by the viewer. The whole effect of the display of *magnificencia* meant more than the details. There was a great difference between imperial art and the art which resulted from private patronage. The emperor made use of the rhetoric of abundance and the redundancy of images to display his wealth and power while the private patron, who had considerably less means, gave great importance to ground level visibility of the works of art he paid for in order to get his money's worth.

It is obvious that this form of imperial display could not be absorbed by Christian artists. Even though popes had been influenced to some extent by the rhetoric of imperial representational art, the objective of Christian imagery is completely different from that of imperial imagery. It is far-reaching, comprehensive and 'salvational'. Those like André Grabar and Paul Veyne¹⁸ who mention the column of Trajan and the mosaics of S. Maria Maggiore in the same breath, ought to be aware of the principal difference between imperial and ecclesiastical-episcopal representational art. The main problem was that the Church wanted to adhere to the second commandment¹⁹ – and consequently to the verdict concerning images – but it was also under enormous pressure because Roman imagery was omnipresent in the cities, in both the public and private domain, and was still greatly appreciated by the wealthy upper classes whose members had all suddenly converted to Christianity with the emperor Constantine. Their fondness for pagan customs and images was much stronger than their desire to observe the second commandment which forbids not only the veneration of images but images *tout court*. The Church's embarrassment

¹⁸ E.g. A. GRABAR, *Christian Iconography: A Study of its Origins* (Princeton, 1968: *Bollingen Series XXXV*, 10), pp. 46-49, Fig. 135-144; P. VEYNE, *La société romaine*, p. 325.

¹⁹ Sister M.C. MURRAY, "Art and the Early Church", *Journal of Theological Studies* 28 (1977), pp. 304-305 and p. 308 thinks that "the Fathers do not seem to have had any clear idea about the interpretation of Mosaic texts, and so their explanations are not always coherent", and (p. 311) "that in the early Christian period the prohibition was regarded in contemporary Jewish circles as definitely modified, while by Christians it was regarded as irrelevant save in matters of Old Testament exegesis". This is in my view a misunderstanding. The absence of a thorough discussion of the meaning of the second commandment in theological texts is an expression of a deep embarrassment of the Fathers, because art had spread within Christianity as a result of the overwhelming influence of the pagans who had been christianized only superficially. The Church was simply overwhelmed by the pagans who brought all their habits with them. After all, the Mosaic commandments existed and could not be dismissed. The early Church fathers were not hostile to art, they were embarrassed.

was discernable – and still is today – when it has to interpret the second commandment. When some church fathers gave the justification that pictures could be looked at even by those who were not able to read, it showed that they believed that images had a convincing force which gave pictures a new energy they had not had before.

The aid of a theologian is very often needed in order to understand Christian images because the level of communication by the image corresponds only rarely to the level of reception of the viewer. Gregory the Great said that images are the Bible of the unlearned, an assertion which simply expressed his embarrassment about images and what he thought they should be.²⁰

During the fourth century, the Church slowly learned to tolerate the presence of images despite the biblical verdict regarding them – though the Church was not able to express a convincing doctrine concerning the thorny issue.²¹ Understandably, there is no direct mention of official Constantinian programs for frescoes or wall paintings in churches²² and it seems that image programs developed mainly within the private funeral realm and in imperial mausolea.

I should like to compare the two mid-fourth-century programs of the private villa rustica of Centcelles near Tarragona with the imperial mausoleum of S. Costanza in Rome (Fig. 5). The rhetoric of S. Costanza²³ is typically imperial insofar as it displays a great wealth of architectural design and luxury including: wall paintings, mosaics in all vaulted sections of the building (Figs. 6-7), marble revetment on the walls (Fig. 8) and finely chosen building materials,

²⁰ J. ENGEMANN, *Deutung und Bedeutung frühchristlicher Bildwerke* (Darmstadt, 1997), p. 31; this idea is also expressed, though with a different tone, by Hypatius, bishop of Ephesos. D. JANES, *God and Gold in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, 1998) p. 142; G. CANTINO WATAGHIN, “Biblia Pauperum: A proposito dell’arte dei primi cristiani”, *Antiquité tardive* 9 (2001), pp. 259-274, particularly p. 260.

²¹ G.B. LADNER, “The concept of image in the Greek Fathers and the Byzantine iconoclastic Controversy”, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 7 (1953), pp. 3-34; ID., *Ad imaginem Dei: The Image of Man in Medieval Art* (Latrobe, PA, 1965: *Wimmer Lecture* 1962), on the “incarnational conception” of early Christian art; H.G. THÜMMEL and W. VON LOEWENICH, “Bilder”, in: *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*, ed. G. KRAUSE and G. MÜLLER, 6 (Berlin, 1980), col. 515-568; D. MENOZZI, *La chiesa e le immagini: I testi fondamentali sulle arti figurative dalle origini ai giorni nostri* (Milano, 1995).

²² F. BISCONTI, “Progetti decorativi dei primi edifici di culto romani: Dalle assenze figurative ai grandi scenari iconografici”, in: *Ecclesiae Urbis: Atti del congresso internazionale di studi sulle chiese di Roma*, ed. F. GUIDOBALDI and A. GUIGLIA GUIDOBALDI, 3 vols. (Città del Vaticano, 2002), 3, pp. 1633-1658.

²³ H. STERN, “Les mosaïques de l’église de S. Constance à Rome”, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 12 (1958), pp. 159-218.

including the porphyry sarcophagus for Constantina. But were the cupola mosaics visible at all? The watercolour by Francesco d'Ollanda (Fig. 6 and Colour Plate 1) shows a cupola divided into sectors by radial *thymiateria*. On the bottom, we recognize an aquatic nilotic landscape where Old and New Testament scenes are included – seemingly – at random. These scenes do not tell a story, but function as *paradigmata*. It is doubtful, however, whether these scenes were meant to be deciphered even though they are firmly in their place at a height of *ca.* 18.50 metres (when looked at from the ambulatory), proclaiming the doctrine of the Old Testament prophecies to be fulfilled in the New Testament. The cupola decoration (Figs. 6-7) conveys the impression that these biblical scenes did not serve to address and indoctrinate the viewer, but rather, that the general message of a luxurious, even though conventional, decoration scheme for a cupola which included an aquatic landscape and Christian scenes was more important. Here, the display of rich imperial decoration was far more important than the specific message of each biblical image.

The two largest rooms in the Villa rustica of Centcelles²⁴ have a circular plan and have cupolas; the Villa belongs to the most debated monuments of Late Antiquity. Was the circular room with cupola mosaics (Figs. 5 and 9) an imperial mausoleum or the dining room of the wealthy owner of the villa rustica? The cupola with mosaics shows the owner of the villa as a patron of a steeple chase (Fig. 10) while large Old and New Testament scenes testify to his Christian faith (Fig. 9 and Colour Plate 2). In contrast to the cupola mosaics of S. Costanza, the Christian scenes in the cupola of Centcelles are surprisingly large and clearly arranged. Those who knew the Bible could easily understand the single images that appeared to be naive 'ad-hoc-inventions' because of both choice and size. These scenes, however, are well known in contemporary funeral art. Apparently, the patron of the villa sought to declare his Christian belief with these paradigms of salvation, though, at the same time, it was important for him to express his delight in being the happy owner of a steeple chase. In the chase image, the owner is represented without attributes in accordance to the typical mentality of the private patron (Fig. 10). To the contrary, an emperor would never have chosen the juxtaposition of a steeple chase and Christian scenes, because the Church would have told him that a steeple chase is purely worldly business and not a good example of imperial behaviour.

In my opinion, the two nearly contemporary programs of S. Costanza and Centcelles make clear the different attitudes of an imperial and a private donor. Only a private owner, such as the owner of the villa rustica of Centcelles, could

²⁴ H. SCHLUNK, *Die Mosaikkuppel von Centcelles* (Mainz, 1988).

take the liberty to express his naive delight for the steeple chase, while at the same time documenting his Christian faith in the belief he was increasing his chances of salvation. In S. Costanza the designer of the program did not represent the personal expectations of the imperial Constantina, but rather the imperial well being – without, however, being too explicit. Only the two mosaics in the apses are the kind of straightforward declarations in favour of the Pope and S. Peter, expected to be expressed by an emperor. The mosaics of the cupola of Centelles were nicely visible, while the Christian scenes in the cupola of S. Costanza (Figs. 6-7) were practically invisible and they were thought to express the imperial rhetoric of *abundantia*.

The imperial rhetoric of *abundantia* is mainly present in churches, such as S. Paolo outside the Walls in Rome and S. Apollinare Nuovo in Ravenna. I hasten to say that there are exceptions such as the church of the monastery built by Justinian on Mount Sinai.²⁵ The church of S. Paolo (Fig. 11) was built on the initiative of Pope Damasus, but was financed by the emperors Valentinian II, Theodosius and Arcadius.²⁶ These emperors were responsible for the enormous proportions of the church and the considerable luxury of its architectural decoration. The mosaics of the triumphal arch (Fig. 12) seem to have been donated by Galla Placidia and Pope Leo I. The rhetoric of *abundantia* is particularly recognizable on the two superimposed long registers of frescoes on the clerestory of the nave (Fig. 11). Unfortunately, we only have seventeenth-century drawings of these paintings, though it is clear that the viewer is to admire the whole impact of these frescoes, and not their single images, because they were painted directly beneath the clerestory, much too high up to be clearly visible. Young people might be able to distinguish some details, but it would be impossible for them to understand the cycles without a guide who knew all about the project, but the existence of such a guide is only a hypothesis, proposed by Joseph Engemann. Therefore, even though the frescoes were visible, they were incomprehensible for most of the churchgoers. The main purpose of the cycle was to exhibit the history of salvation and to display imperial patronage; both messages were clearly apparent to every churchgoer. The idea some ecclesiastics had that the Christian image is a sort of 'Bible for the illiterate' is nothing more than wishful thinking which also reveals the total

²⁵ G. FORSYTH and K. WEITZMANN, *The Monastery of Saint Catherine at Mount Sinai: The Church and Fortress of Justinian* (Ann Arbor, 1965).

²⁶ R. KRAUTHEIMER, *Corpus Basilicarum Christianarum Romae*, 5 (Città del Vaticano, 1977) pp. 93-164; H. BRANDENBURG, "Die Basilica S. Paolo fuori le mura, der Apostel-Hymnus des Prudentius (Peristeph. XII) und die architektonische Ausstattung des Baus", in: *Ecclesiae Urbis: Atti del congresso internazionale di studi sulle chiese di Roma*, ed. GUIDOBALDI and A. GUIGLIA GUIDOBALDI, 3 (Città del Vaticano, 2002), pp. 1525-1578.

embarrassment of the Church when confronted with the issue of image. The church fathers legitimized the prohibited image as a catechetical medium. The idea that the image could convince the peasants (*rustici*) was only a theory, contradicted by many images. The average churchgoer could not read,²⁷ but he or she listened to the lofty sermons of the theologians and the bishops and though, often, he or she could not understand much of what was said,²⁸ gazing for instance at the mosaics of S. Maria Maggiore²⁹ (Fig. 13), such churchgoers certainly realized that the rhetoric of this church was a little more modest than the rhetoric of S. Paul's, because this church had been constructed by a pope. Sixtus III had chosen only one mosaic per intercolumniation; and, even though, these were clearly visible, they remained totally obscure to most.

The mosaics of the triumphal arch of S. Paolo,³⁰ however, must have been clearly visible because they were arranged in just two registers, each of which was several metres high (Fig. 12). The viewer could have easily seen the twenty-four elders of the Apocalypse offering their crowns to Christ; but could he have also understood why Saint Peter and Saint Paul were included in this apocalyptic vision? Saint Peter's head (Fig. 14), which is still preserved today,

²⁷ E. AUERBACH, *Literatursprache und Publikum in der lateinischen Spätantike und im Mittelalter* (Bern, 1958); W. HARRIS, *Ancient Literacy* (Harvard, 1989); M. BEARD, A.K. BOWMAN *et al.*, *Literacy in the Roman World* (Ann Arbor, 1991: *Journal of Roman Archaeology*, Suppl. Series 3); S. MRATSCHEK, *Der Briefwechsel des Paulinus von Nola: Kommunikation und soziale Kontakte zwischen christlichen Intellektuellen* (Göttingen, 2002), pp. 399, 407; A. CAMERON, "Education and literary culture", in: *The Cambridge Ancient History*, 2nd edn., 13: *The Late Empire, AD 337-425*, ed. A. CAMERON and P. GARNSEY (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 665-707, esp. pp. 669-670 on the Christian 'language of fishermen' (*sermo piscatorius*).

²⁸ AUERBACH, *Literatursprache und Publikum*, p. 196: on the incomprehensibility of the sermons for the *rustici*; R. MACMULLEN, "A note on *sermo humilis*", *Journal of Theological Studies*, N.S. 17 (1966), pp. 108-112; R. MACMULLEN, "The preacher's audience (AD 350-400)", *Journal of Theological Studies*, N.S. 40 (1989), pp. 503-511, esp. p. 508: "John Chrysostom is conscious of repelling members of the Christian community in both Antioch and Constantinople by the prolixity and complexity of his pulpit rhetoric, and he rebukes them for their ignorance of scripture" – but MacMullen concludes that only a selection came to worship in church: the city's leadership, the upper ranks, accompanied by their slaves; the "more honourable", having the privilege of being acquainted with culture and learning, were certainly able to follow the theological issues of the preachers; *Preacher and Audience. Studies in Early Christian and Byzantine Homiletics*, ed. M.B. CUNNINGHAM and P. ALLEN (Leiden, 1998: *A New History of the Sermon* 1).

²⁹ B. BRENK, *Die frühchristlichen Mosaiken von S. Maria Maggiore zu Rom* (Stuttgart, 1975).

³⁰ S. WAETZOLDT, "Zur Ikonographie des Triumphbogenmosaiks von St. Paul in Rom", in: *Miscellanea Bibliothecae Hertzianae zu Ehren von Leo Bruhns, Franz Graf Wolff Metternich, Ludwig Schudt* (Wien, 1961) pp. 19-28.

is 60 centimetres high meaning that it belonged to a body more than 3 metres tall.³¹ Saint Peter, therefore, was a striking figure who would have been noticed even from a distance. What was difficult for the average churchgoer to understand, however, was why two Roman saints were included in an eschatological vision of the end of the world. While the narrative of Trajanic wars in Dacia was strictly chronological, in Christian art, the perception of time is often suspended. Past, present and future become one.³² The well preserved mosaics of the triumphal arch of S. Maria Maggiore (Fig. 15), 432-440, were from almost the same period as S. Paolo's, but they were arranged in four registers, each not higher than 172 cm. The large quantity of scenes – and the enigmatic code hidden in the iconography – made the message of these mosaics a mysterious one. Their decoding, from a distance of 14-25 metres,³³ required an extremely well-informed guide – i.e. an art historian of the twenty-first century, although a well-trained observer might have been able to recognize the Massacre of the Innocents on the bottom register. Herod (Fig. 16) is the sole figure having an inscription, but who could understand the Scripture authorities with their enigmatic scrolls?³⁴ Even more irritating was the child, clad in a tunic and pallium, sitting on an enormous throne (Fig. 17).³⁵ I am sure that the two scenes on the right hand side of the triumphal arch, which depicted the Arrival of the Holy Family in Egypt (Fig. 18)³⁶ and the Presentation of Christ in the

³¹ M. ANDALORO, "Il mosaico con la testa di Pietro: Dalle Grotte Vaticane all'arco trionfale della basilica di San Paolo fuori le mura", in: *Fragmenta Picta: Affreschi e mosaici staccati del Medioevo romano*, ed. A. GHIDOLI (Roma, 1989), pp. 111-118.

³² R. BRILLIANT, "Temporal aspects in late Roman art", *L'Arte* (1970), pp. 65-87.

³³ The distance from today's ciborium at S. Maria Maggiore to the scene with the Magi before Herod is 14 m., but it is 16.70 m. to the scene of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple. Moreover, the standpoint from the ciborium and the gaze up to the triumphal arch would be that of the priests. The average church goer was not allowed to set foot in the central nave, he had a look from the aisles to the opposite clerestory wall, a distance measuring 19 m. The central nave is 16.78 m wide and 18.28 m. high. T.F. MATHEWS, "An early Roman chancel arrangement", *Rivista di archeologia cristiana* 38 (1962), p. 83: "The nave is the grand processional corridor for the hierarchy on their way to their sacred employment; the congregation area is chiefly in the aisles", and also p. 93; S. DE BLAAUW, *Cultus et Decor: Liturgia e architettura nella Roma tardoantica e medievale*, 2 vols. (Città del Vaticano, 1994), 1, p. 83; H. BRANDENBURG, "Kirchenbau und Liturgie: Überlegungen zum Verhältnis von architektonischer Gestalt und Zweckbestimmung des frühchristlichen Kultbaus im 4. und 5. Jh.", in: *Divitiae Aegypti: Koptologische und verwandte Studien zu Ehren von Martin Krause*, ed. C. FLUCK et al. (Wiesbaden, 1995) p. 41.

³⁴ BRENK, *Die frühchristlichen Mosaiken von S. Maria Maggiore*, pp. 32-33, 45.

³⁵ BRENK, *Die frühchristlichen Mosaiken von S. Maria Maggiore*, pp. 24-27, 35-49 and Fig. 48.

³⁶ BRENK, *Die frühchristlichen Mosaiken von S. Maria Maggiore*, pp. 27-30.

Temple³⁷ were totally incomprehensible because these two scenes diverge from common iconography. Joseph Engemann was right when he wrote: "The content and the meaning of pictorial representations could be explained by illiterates and literates alike, only when these were interpreted to them".³⁸ But who was going to interpret church mosaics to the public? Not a single source mentions even the existence of such 'interpreters'. Moreover, it is well known that the majority of the Romans were not able to read. It seems therefore that this sort of Christian church art was primarily a matter for the literate elite, such as Paulinus of Nola,³⁹ Ambrose, Sulpicius Severus, etc.

Our occupation with the picture cycles at S. Paolo and S. Maria Maggiore brings us to the conclusion that these cycles were perceivable only in their entirety as the history of salvation. Even though it was possible to see the single scenes, it was in many cases impossible to decode their content. The fact that the scenes were not only too small (the Old Testament scenes in the clerestory of S. Maria Maggiore measure 160/170 cm. to 190 cm.) but also placed far too high up – not to mention their unusual artistic accentuation – meant that an interpreter was essential.

The discourse around the invisibility or partial visibility of the early Christian image soon becomes a discourse about the intelligibility of the early Christian image and about the sense of artistic decoration tout court. My most important point is that art has only rarely been exploited by the Church to indoctrinate believers. The Church just wanted to represent the history of salvation but left it to the patrons and to the artists to decide how this ought to be done. The Church delegated the responsibility for church decoration and for images to the bishops and they, in turn, often delegated this responsibility to the artists themselves. The sources providing information about the mentality of bishops make it quite clear that there was no "unité de doctrine" at all. Ambrose and Paulinus of Nola⁴⁰ were decidedly in favour of images, while Jerome and

³⁷ BRENK, *Die frühchristlichen Mosaiken von S. Maria Maggiore*, pp. 19-24 and Fig. 47.

³⁸ J. ENGEMANN, *Deutung und Bedeutung frühchristlicher Bildwerke* (Darmstadt, 1997), p. 31.

³⁹ MRATSCHEK, *Der Briefwechsel des Paulinus von Nola*.

⁴⁰ Paulinus of Nola is one of the very few authors who reflected on the use of images: "It may be asked how we arrived at this decision, to paint, a rare custom, images of living beings on the holy houses. Hark and I will attempt briefly to expound the causes (...) the majority of the crowd here, however, are peasant people not devoid of religion but not able to read. These people, for long accustomed to profane cults, in which their belly was their God, are at last converted into proselytes for Christ while they admire the works of the saints in Christo open to everybody's gaze. (...) Therefore it seemed to us useful work gaily to embellish Felix' houses all over with sacred paintings in order to see whether the spirit of the peasants would not be surprised by this spectacle and undergo the influence of the coloured sketches which are

Augustine were against them. Roman history includes art lovers on one hand, and people like Cicero⁴¹ – who thought that people who admire statues and images were simply silly – on the other. Seneca⁴² said: “*imago res mortua est*”. Not a single church father⁴³ could really believe that the mosaics of S. Maria Maggiore were the Bible of the illiterates because these mosaics were, and remain, cryptic. My second conclusion is that mosaicists had great liberty in composing their images, especially when they were allowed to invent new scenes. The whole cycle of S. Maria Maggiore is an *ex novo* invention without precedence and without succession. It was envisioned by a great designer and realized by outstanding artists. The concept was what mattered and – like a book with seven seals – the mosaics were visible but not their content for the average churchgoer! It is evident that scholars today ought to make a clear difference between the work of art as it is preserved (if visible or not has in this context no importance) and the work of art in its entirety, often only partly visible. In the first case the work of art, that is to say each image and each decoration has to be taken for granted as a concept thought out by the ‘concepteur’, i.e. the inventor and designer of the image. In the second case the work of art has to be taken seriously as a rhetorical entity, in which the dimensions, the material wealth, the luxury, the variety, the abundance of images and decoration, and above all the pretensions of the forms and art species express a rhetoric that reached the public *nolens-volens*. It is clear that it will be quite difficult to find texts describing this rhetoric: there was no reason declaring in words the rhetoric of a work of art, the rhetoric was represented by

explained by inscriptions over them, so that the script may be clear what the hand has exhibited. Maybe that, when they in turn show and reread to each other what has been painted, their thoughts will turn more slowly to eating, while they saturate themselves with a fast that is pleasing to the eyes, and perhaps a better habit will thus in their stupefaction take root in them, because of the painting artfully diverting their thoughts from their hunger” (*Carmen* 27, 542-552 and 580-589; R.C. GOLDSCHMIDT, *Paulinus’ Churches at Nola: Text, Translations and Commentary* (Amsterdam, 1940), pp. 63-65). It may be noted that Paulinus says at the beginning that the peasants are not able to read (“*rusticitas ... neque docta legendi*”, line 548), but at the end of the text he all of a sudden says “*ostendunt releguntque sibi*” (namely the *tituli*, line 586). It becomes clear that Paulinus’ explanation of the function of the image was invented *ad hoc*. MRATSCHEK, *Der Briefwechsel des Paulinus von Nola*, pp. 405-406.

⁴¹ Cicero, *Parad.*, 5. 36: “*atque in pari stultitia sunt, quos signa, quos, tabulae, quos celatum argentum, quos Corinthia opera, quos aedificia magnifica nimio opere delectant*” (Th. PEKÁRY, *Imago res mortua est* (Stuttgart, 2002) p. 32).

⁴² PEKÁRY, *Imago res mortua est* (Stuttgart, 2002), p. 39.

⁴³ H.G. THÜMMEL, *Die Frühgeschichte der ostkirchlichen Bilderlehre: Texte und Untersuchungen zur Zeit vor dem Bilderstreit* (Berlin, 1999).

the work of art itself. Paulinus gives us an idea how this rhetoric worked, for example in *Carmen* 27 where he describes the church of St. Felix:

Three workmen have elaborated it, working with all kinds of decorations, a team of two carpenters with ceiling-panelling and marble and an artist with paintings of divine countenances. ... In wood this ceiling simulates ivory, and the chandeliers hanging from it are kept suspended by brass cords and in the centre of the space the lights move hoveringly on slack ropes, a light wind playing with the waving flames and, whereas the roof at the first stood on pillars, it has at present, now that it rests on columns, come to despise the cheap stucco, which was exchanged for marble.⁴⁴

This text is of utmost importance because it mentions exactly the single steps of pretensions: the wooden ceiling imitates ivory, marble replaces cheap stucco, columns replace modest pillars etc. The high standing of this ecclesiastical art is based on the presence of marble, painting (mosaic), coffered (painted) ceiling and columns. Interestingly, the Council of Trent was still not able to add new arguments to justify the Christian image. They repeat arguments of the Second Council of Nicaea: The honour offered to the image is directed to the prototype they represent. As in the early Christian period images are said to instruct the believers, they are meant to be didactic.⁴⁵

Another example of a typical imperial mosaic decoration is found in Ravenna in the church of S. Apollinare Nuovo⁴⁶ which was built and decorated with mosaics by King Theodoric in the first quarter of the sixth century (Fig. 19 and Colour Plate 3). Because it was a palace church, it was connected to the nearby palace probably by a portico. The mosaics of the church decorate the clerestory in carpet form, in contrast to the Roman mosaics of S. Paolo (Fig. 11) and S. Maria Maggiore (Fig. 13), where each scene was framed as if it were a panel painting. The mosaics of the time of Theodoric on the inferior register were destroyed around 560 and replaced by a procession of male and female martyrs, still preserved today. The thirty-two prophets, apostles and evangelists in the second register (in the clerestory) are not identified with inscriptions

⁴⁴ *Carmen* 27, 385-394 (GOLDSCHMIDT, *Paulinus' Churches at Nola*, pp. 54-55); see also *Carmen* 28, 14: "There churches stand fraternally next to each other ... brightened in varying manner with equally beautiful decorations: marble, painting, panelled ceilings and columns ..." (*"et paribus varie speciosae cultibus extant marmore pictura laquearibus atque columnis"*; GOLDSCHMIDT, *Paulinus' Churches at Nola*, pp. 72-73).

⁴⁵ W. VON LOEWENICH, "Bilder VI.", in: *Theologische Realenzyklopädie* 6 (Berlin, 1980), col. 555-556.

⁴⁶ F.W. DEICHMANN, *Ravenna: Hauptstadt des spätantiken Abendlandes, Kommentar*, 1 (Wiesbaden, 1974), p. 128.

(Figs. 19-20). This is in contrast to the male and female martyrs below who all have inscriptions. The prophets wear books with unreadable inscriptions and, to the frustration of the viewer, none of the thirty-two prophets reveals his identity. This means that the designer of the mosaic cycle has chosen countless, nameless learned 'men of God' on the window level to represent the infinite history of salvation. Their tunics and pallia and their books and scrolls legitimate them as interpreters and 'heralds' of the Christian teaching. Again the impact from seeing the multitude of figures mattered more than the single figures, themselves in accordance to the use of redundancy in royal rhetoric.

In the top register of the clerestory, much higher than eye level and impossible to be clearly seen by the viewer,⁴⁷ the designer has displayed an extensive cycle of New Testament scenes, consisting of a cycle of miracles of Christ on the north side and scenes from the passion of Christ on the south side (Fig. 19). Although the viewer is able to see the general elements, he is not able to distinguish their details and, therefore, wholly unable to appreciate the artistic value of the mosaics. These images, like the majority of images linked with architecture in antiquity, were not created for the delight of a viewer. These mosaics were a glimpse of a sacred universe. They represented the deeds of God's manifestation on Earth in a 'real' way, the depth of which is not easy for humankind to understand.⁴⁸ The figure of Christ is repeated many times in a frontal and/or central position. If the viewer were able to understand the meaning of only a very few scenes, it would be apparent to him that these mosaics were about the deeds of Christ on Earth.

At this point, it is clear that the redundancy of Christ in the mosaics of S. Apollinare Nuovo has something to do with the redundancy of Trajan on his column in Rome where his image is repeated 60 times. In both we see the presence of imperial rhetoric challenging the viewer to comprehend the totality of the scenes rather than their details.

To try to convince someone that these cycles were meant as a Bible for the illiterate would be a difficult task, indeed. If the designer of the cycle of S. Apollinare Nuovo had wanted to represent a picture-bible, then he could have represented all the scenes of the life of Christ more effectively on a lower register. But he did not. Imperial rhetoric – or royal rhetoric in this case – is apparent in the quantity of mosaics, the quantity of single figures and scenes,

⁴⁷ F.W. DEICHMANN, *Ravenna: Hauptstadt des spätantiken Abendlandes: Geschichte und Monumente* (Wiesbaden, 1969), p. 176; today's distance from the colonnade to the opposite clerestory, especially to the New Testament scenes, is 17.60 m.

⁴⁸ DEICHMANN, *Ravenna: Hauptstadt des spätantiken Abendlandes: Geschichte und Monumente*, p. 189.

and in the redundancy of the figure of Christ. These criteria are the same as those for the column of Trajan.

The meaning of the program lies in the nearly endless and luxurious abundance of figures and scenes in the history of salvation. Whosoever calls the prophets in S. Apollinare monotonous must realize that this monotony was the intentional use of the tool of redundancy in royal rhetoric.⁴⁹

The reasons for the partial invisibility of wall mosaics in churches are valid also in the case of painted and sculpted beams of wooden ceilings, expressing a high pretension of the donor. In a house inhabited by the military administration of the Roman garrison town of Dura Europos, the residents had themselves portrayed on the soffits. Well preserved are the third-century portraits of *Heliodoros actuarius* (Fig. 21) and *Ulpus Silvanos tessendaris*, members of Dura's military administration.⁵⁰ What was the meaning of these portraits in a magistrate's office at a height of 5.50 m? Altogether 115 rectangular soffits, measuring 47 to 26 cm. were found. Besides nine portrait busts, there are conventional decorative motifs preserved such as pomegranates, oranges, grapes, pine-cones, roses, a gazelle, and the personifications of Flora, Pan and Silenus, so that we have to do with a decorative ensemble where the heads and especially their inscriptions were hardly visible. Since the names and official titles of the residents are inscribed, it can not be excluded that the mixture of flowers, fruits and personifications of gods was 'wishful thinking': the residents hoped for happiness and welfare. It was not so important that all the details could be seen, but that they were there. This is probably true for nearly all soffits, whether they embellish private houses or public buildings and temples.⁵¹ Well known are the sculpted beams of the wooden ceiling of the sixth-century church of St. Catherine's at Mount Sinai (Fig. 22).⁵² The thirteen beams are decorated with thirteen different patterns, displaying thereby the aesthetic concept of *varietas*.⁵³ The detailed design of these patterns was cer

⁴⁹ DEICHMANN, *Ravenna: Hauptstadt des spätantiken Abendlandes: Geschichte und Monumente*, p. 200.

⁵⁰ M. ROSTOVITZ et al., *Excavations at Dura Europos: Preliminary Report of the Sixth Season* (New Haven, 1936), pp. 265-304, esp. pp. 291-292; *Age of Spirituality: Late Antique and Early Christian Art, Third to Seventh Century: Catalogue of the Exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, ed. K. WEITZMANN (New York, 1979) No. 52.

⁵¹ F.W. DEICHMANN, "Kassettendecken", in: ID., *Rom, Ravenna, Konstantinopel, Naher Osten: Gesammelte Studien zur spätantiken Architektur, Kunst und Geschichte* (Wiesbaden, 1982), pp. 228-252, 247 on the Synagogue of Dura Europos, where animals, fish, flowers, floral motives, heads and donor's inscriptions in wreaths decorate the panels of the coffered ceiling.

⁵² FORSYTH and WEITZMANN, *The Monastery of Saint Catherine at Mount Sinai* (Ann Arbor, 1965), Pls. LXCI-LXXIX.

⁵³ On *varietas* see B. BRENK, "Four Langobardic marble reliefs recently acquired by the

tainly not discernable from the floor of the church, but the viewer was able to see that these beams were carefully sculpted.

I conclude with some remarks on the instalment of sarcophagi in mausolea and burial grounds. Many of the richly sculpted Christian sarcophagi were not visible to the public, not even to the bereaved. The mausoleum⁵⁴ of Julius Tarpeianus in the necropolis under St. Peter's (Figs. 23-24), built at the beginning of the fourth century for a twenty-one-month old child, has such a small entrance that a visitor could only enter by kneeling down. It is the smallest chamber-tomb of the Vatican Necropolis (1.63×1.98 m.). The vault of the chamber is decorated with a fine mosaic representing the personification of Helios on a biga in the middle of a vine tendril, and its walls with Christian scriptural scenes (Jonah, fisherman, shepherd). The mosaics were obviously not made to be visible, but they functioned more as a gift for the deceased. This is also true for many sarcophagi, even for those with fine relief decoration which disappeared in the earth altogether with the corpse of the dead, so that even the sarcophagus could never be seen. Antonio Ferrua describes the sarcophagus of Flavius Patricius of the year 360, discovered in 1948 in the necropolis of S. Sebastiano outside Rome⁵⁵ "profondamente sepolto sotto il suolo del mausoleo". Unfortunately he did not draw or document the exact archaeological situation. A second sarcophagus in the same necropolis, the so-called 'sarcofago delle due donne', was also found "profondamente infossato circa m. 2,85 sotto il piano di campagna e metri due sotto il tufo naturale".⁵⁶ This sarcophagus is dated by an inscription to the year 392 and has a relief decoration showing SS. Peter and Paul and the two deceased sisters in a clipeus. The so-called 'sarcofago di Lot' was found in 1950, again "profondamente sepolto sotto il pavimento di un lussuosissimo mausoleo rotondo".⁵⁷ Unfortunately, Ferrua

Cloisters", in: *The Cloisters: Studies in Honour of the Fiftieth Anniversary*, ed. E.C. PARKER with M.B. SHEPARD (New York, 1992), pp. 63-85; ID., "Spolien und ihre Wirkung auf die Ästhetik der varietas: Zum Problem alternierender Kapitelltypen", in: *Antike Spolien in der Architektur des Mittelalters und der Renaissance*, ed. J. POESCHKE (München, 1996), pp. 49-80.

⁵⁴ F. FERAUDI-GRUÉNAIS, *UBI DIUTIUS NOBIS HABITANDUM EST: Die Innendekoration der kaiserzeitlichen Gräber Roms* (Wiesbaden, 2001: *Palilia* 9), p. 56 and Fig. 35; *Esplorazioni sotto la confessione di San Pietro in Vaticano eseguite negli anni 1940-1949*, ed. B.M. APOLLONI GHETTI *et al.* (Città del Vaticano, 1951) pp. 38-42, Fig. 18-21 and colour plates B and C.

⁵⁵ A. FERRUA, "Tre sarcofagi importanti da S. Sebastiano", *Rivista di Archeologia Cristiana* 27 (1951), pp. 7-33, esp. p. 8: "Per collocarlo ben fermo si era scavato profondamente dentro il tufo vergine, per modo che l'orlo della cassa si trovava alquanto più di un metro sotto il piano delle altre sepolture terragne scavate tutt'intorno nel tufo".

⁵⁶ FERRUA, "Tre sarcofagi importanti da S. Sebastiano", p. 14 and Figs. 4-6.

⁵⁷ FERRUA, "Tre sarcofagi importanti da S. Sebastiano", Fig. 8: "Questo mausoleo sorgeva a poca distanza dall'ala settentrionale della basilica di S. Sebastiano, con la quale era forse in

failed to document this mausoleum, too, and the position of the sarcophagus in it. All we have is his description. Ferrua explains this custom to bury sarcophagi deep in the earth: "Tutto il lusso e la spesa della lavorazione restava un omaggio interamente dedicato alla memoria del trapassato: si può dire che d'ora in poi egli solo si sarebbe goduto l'artistico monumento in cui era stato deposto".⁵⁸ In the apse of Old S. Peters in Rome, Christian sarcophagi, richly decorated with images were buried from the second half of the fourth century onwards. One of the most prominent and luxuriously decorated is the sarcophagus of Junius Bassus, the Prefect who died in 354; nonetheless, it was never visible.

The best discussion of the problem of hidden sarcophagi is provided by a recent book by Jutta Dresken-Weiland,⁵⁹ but it offers concurrent explanations. In the English summary, the author says: "The burial of a sarcophagus in the earth must be motivated through lack of place in the mausoleum and/or the necessity to protect the marble coffin against theft and re-use".⁶⁰ It is difficult to prove these assumptions. In another context she says that it is not so much the image that matters as the fact of a marble sarcophagus;⁶¹ she stresses the significance of a sarcophagus burial as such and, relative to that, diminishes the importance of the figural decoration.⁶² But the author mentions also a sarcophagus, found in Teano, adorned with a mosaic with figural representations and an inscription of the year 370.⁶³ Some years ago Maria Andaloro uncovered a sarcophagus in S. Susanna in Rome in which fragments of a fresco were buried; the fresco represents the Virgin Mary.⁶⁴ Dresken-Weiland mentions furthermore a third-century pagan sarcophagus of Via Lungara in Rome which was unearthed in the late third century and whose sides were then newly decorated with Christian scenes and was hidden again in the earth.⁶⁵

comunicazione".

⁵⁸ FERRUA, "Tre sarcofagi importanti da S. Sebastiano", p. 33.

⁵⁹ J. DRESKEN-WEILAND, *Sarkophagbestattungen des 4.-6. Jahrhunderts im Westen des römischen Reiches* (Rom, Freiburg and Wien, 2003), pp. 185-198; J. DRESKEN-WEILAND, review of G. KOCH, *Frühchristliche Sarkophage* (München, 2000: *Handbuch der Archäologie*), in: *Göttingische Gelehrte Anzeigen* 254 (2002), pp. 33-34.

⁶⁰ DRESKEN-WEILAND, *Sarkophagbestattungen*, p. 214.

⁶¹ DRESKEN-WEILAND, *Sarkophagbestattungen*, p. 194.

⁶² DRESKEN-WEILAND, *Sarkophagbestattungen*, p. 195: "Sichtbarkeit oder Unsichtbarkeit des Sarkophags waren für die Menschen der Kaiserzeit und der Spätantike wohl von eher sekundärer Bedeutung".

⁶³ DRESKEN-WEILAND, *Sarkophagbestattungen*, p. 189 and Figs. 10-12.

⁶⁴ M. ANDALORO, "I dipinti murali depositati nel sarcofago dell'area di Santa Susanna a Roma", in: *Atti del VII Congresso Nazionale di Archeologia Cristiana, Cassino, 20-24 settembre 1993*, 1, ed. E. RUSSO (Cassino, 1993), pp. 377-386.

⁶⁵ DRESKEN-WEILAND, *Sarkophagbestattungen*, p. 188, Fig. 3.

Dresken-Weiland quotes Jean Guyon who favours the opinion that images could have had a protective function for the deceased.⁶⁶ Indeed the role of the invisible image on sarcophagi seems to be much more complicated than it would seem at first glance. The idea was evidently that the images on tombs and on sarcophagi were made to accompany the dead in their afterlife. But how did this work? The visible images of a sarcophagus contributed to the consolation of the bereaved (in case they could visit the mausoleum and interpret the images). On the meaning of the non-visible image we can only speculate. Did they function as apotropaic *bullae*, serving to protect the deceased against evil? It is interesting to note that by far the greatest number of interred and therefore invisible sarcophagi have been found near the tombs of important saints (S. Sebastiano, St. Peter). The owners of these sarcophagi not only wanted to be buried next to the saint in order to profit from his intercession at the Last Judgment, but they also imitated the hidden collocation of the tombs of these saints. It seems that the idea of *imitatio sanctorum* or/and of *imitatio Christi* played a certain role. But many tombs in the so-called 'basiliche circiforme' – all these basilicas were built by emperors – were interred before a cult of a saint even started, i.e. to be buried in a church built by an emperor was probably more a matter of social prestige. As to the invisibility of tomb inscriptions I should like to quote Francisca Feraudi-Gruénais.⁶⁷

Ein Grabbau (bzw. ein Sarkophag [addition by the author]) garantierte einen eigenen, rechtlich zugesicherten Grabplatz, bedeutete Perpetuierung, Verewigung des Namens – gewährleistet durch eine Inschrift. Die tatsächliche Sichtbarkeit des genauen Bestattungsplatzes in der Grabkammer war demgegenüber nur von nachgestellter, wenn nicht sogar vernachlässigbarer Wichtigkeit. Somit offenbart sich eine wichtige Facette im Bedeutungsspektrum von "Grabbau" als einem Synonym für "Präsenz" und "Nachleben".

That an image must be painted or chiselled solely to be viewed is a thoroughly modern idea. Early Christian images are comprehensible only when studied in their original context, where it was indifferent if they were visible or not. Visibility, or its lack, depends on the ambition and rhetoric of the patron/employer. Most of the images discussed in this paper (except the sarcophagi) were visible, but many mosaics and wall paintings on the clerestory walls of the large basilicas could hardly be deciphered and understood because they are located far too high up. In Antiquity the image and architectural deco-

⁶⁶ DRESKEN-WEILAND, *Sarkophagbestattungen*, p. 192.

⁶⁷ F. FERAUDI-GRUÉNAIS, *Inschriften und Selbstdarstellung in stadtrömischen Grabbauten* (Roma, 2003), p. 62.

ration were always an expression of a certain social standing, whether or not they were seen completely. This idea is nicely expressed by Eusebius and Sozomenos, where they describe the church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, built by Constantine:

This, then, was the church of Our Saviour's Resurrection which the Emperor reared as a conspicuous I (*martyrion*) and which he adorned throughout in costly imperial fashion. He also embellished it with numerous offerings of *indescribable beauty*, gold and silver and precious stones set in different materials; the skilful arrangement of which in regard to size, number and variety I have no leisure at present to describe in detail.⁶⁸

The temple, called the 'Great Martyrion', which was built in the place of the skull at Jerusalem, was completed about the thirtieth year of the reign of Constantine (AD 335); ... when the bishops arrived at Jerusalem, the temple was therefore consecrated, as likewise numerous ornaments and gifts, which were sent by the emperor and are still preserved in the sacred edifice; their costliness and magnificence is such that they cannot be looked upon without exciting wonder.⁶⁹

Prudentius describes the Basilica of S. Paolo fuori le mura, begun by the Emperor Theodosius in 384/385 on and finished by his sons Honorius and Valentinian:

The splendour of the place is princely, for our good emperor dedicated this seat and decorated its whole extent with great wealth. He laid plates on the beams so as to make all the light within golden like the sun's radiance at its rising, and supported the gold-paneled ceiling on pillars of Parian marble set out there in four rows. Then he covered the curves of the arches with splendid glass of different hues, like meadows that are bright with the flowers of spring.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Eusebius, *Vita Constantini*, III, 40 (tr. C. MANGO, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire 312-1453* (Englewood Cliffs, 1972) pp. 13-14).

⁶⁹ Sozomenos, *Ecclesiastical History*, II, 26 (E. WALFORD, *The Ecclesiastical History of Sozomen* (London, 1855) p. 92); see also the important contribution by P. LIVERANI, "Progetto architettonico e percezione comune in età tardoantica", *Babesch* 78 (2003), pp. 205-219, esp. p. 206, on the basilica of the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem: "In sintesi, all'imperatore non interessa molto se la basilica sia a tre o a cinque navate, se abbia un cortile o una cupola. La sua prima preoccupazione è fissare il livello che la ricchezza dell'ornamentazione deve raggiungere: il più elevato possibile poichè si tratta del 'luogo più straordinario e meraviglioso che esista al mondo'. ... I mezzi per raggiungere questo livello elevato sono assai semplici: non si parla di sofisticate architetture, ma di una gran profusione di marmi, di colonne e – possibilmente – di soffitti dorati".

⁷⁰ BRANDENBURG, "Die Basilica von S. Paolo fuori le mura", p. 1531.

The 'indescribable beauty', the 'exciting wonder' and the 'splendour' evoked by gold-paneled ceiling, marble and glass are nothing else than elements of imperial rhetoric.

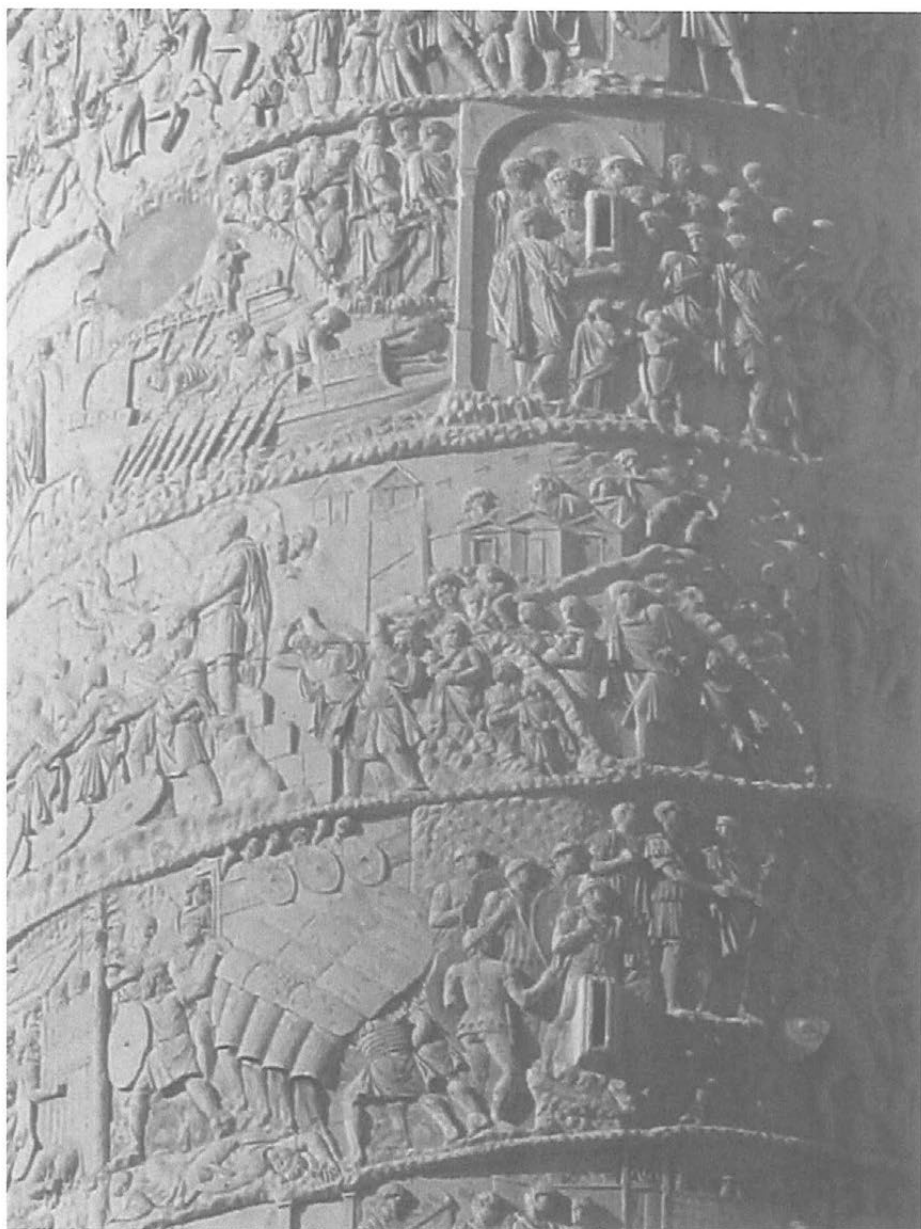


Fig. 1 Column of Trajan, Scenes with Emperor

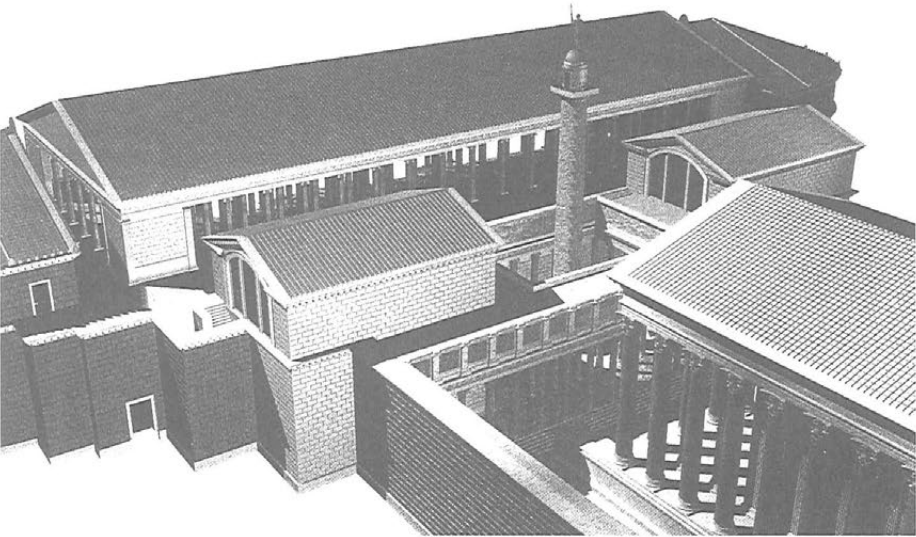


Fig. 2 Rome, Forum of Trajan, Libraries



Fig. 3 Rome, Arch of Constantine, the Tondi



Fig. 4 Rome, Arch of Constantine, Portrait of Licinius

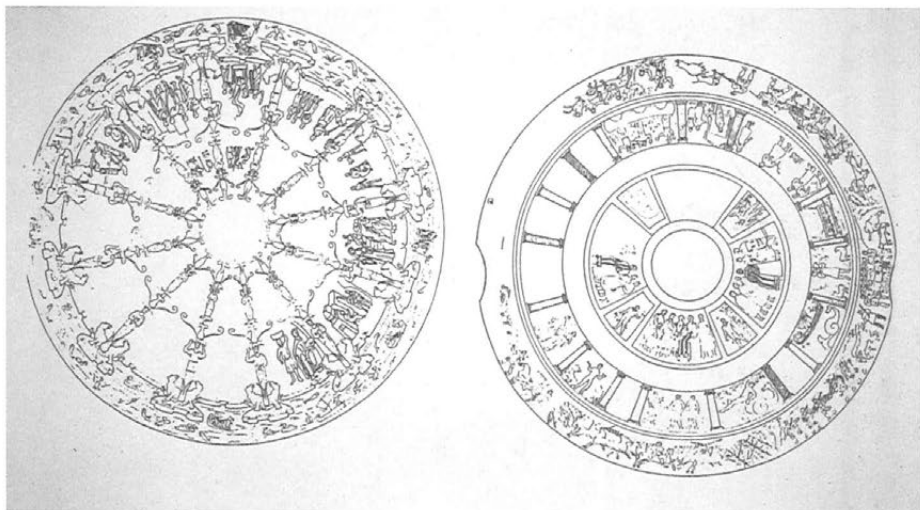


Fig. 5 Rome, S. Costanza, Cupola, and Centcelles, Cupola (drawing)



Fig. 6 Rome, S. Costanza, watercolour of Francisca d'Ollanda: the Cupola-Mosaics (see also Colour Plate 1)

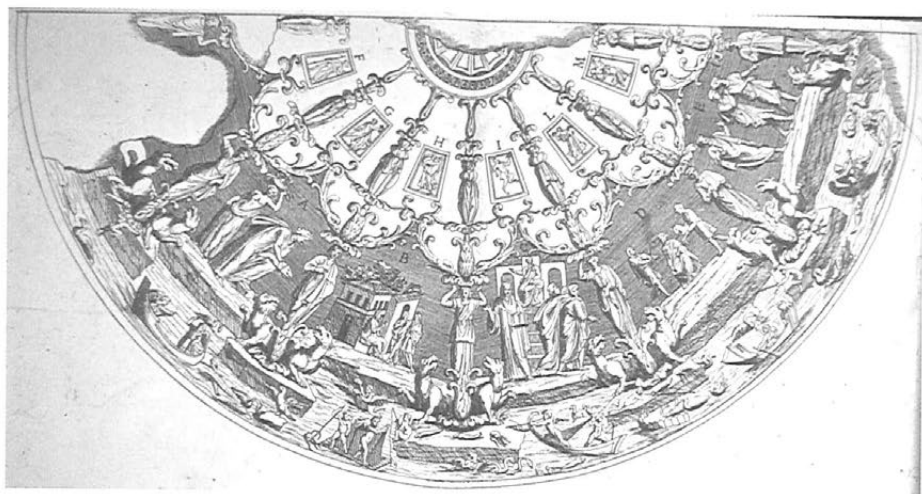


Fig. 7 S. Costanza, Cupola after G. Ciampini

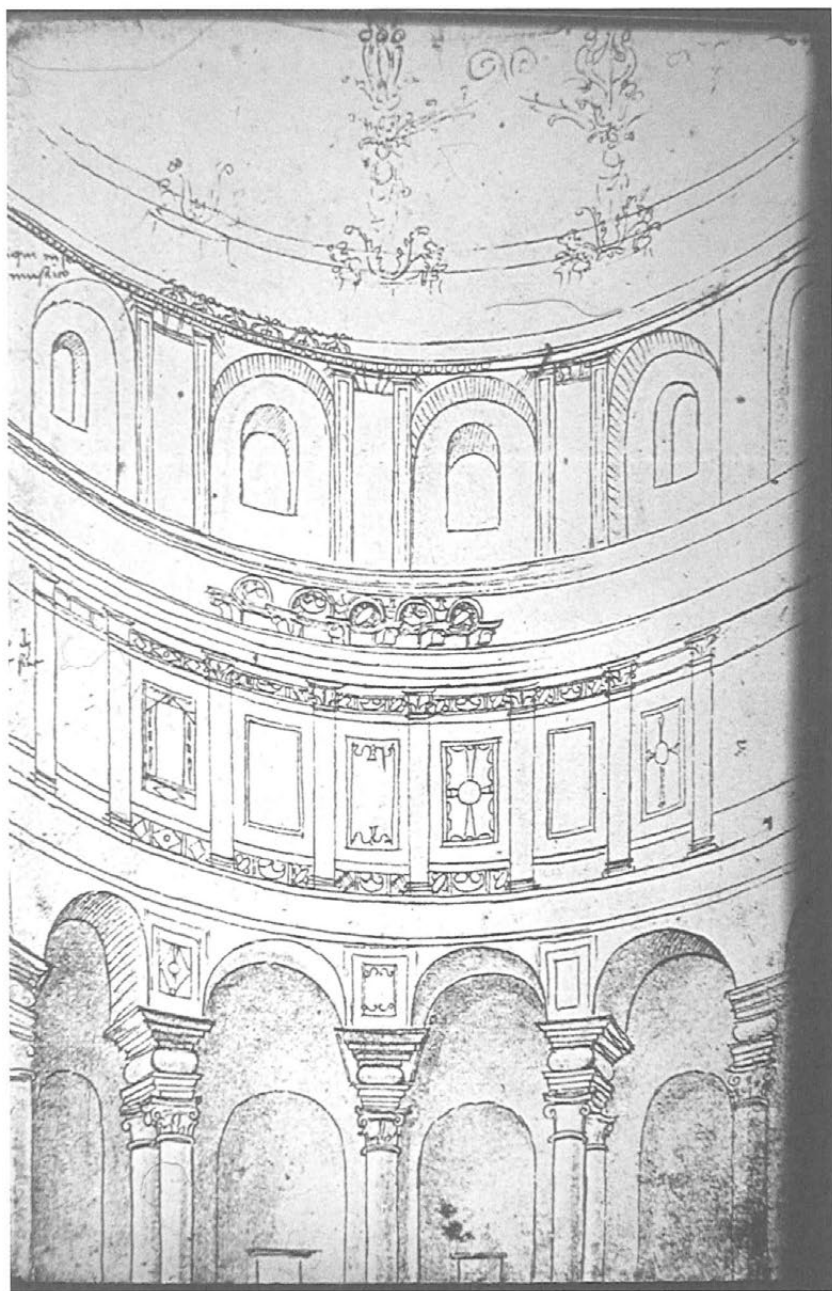


Fig. 8 Rome, S. Costanza, sixteenth-century drawing of the Elevation



Fig. 9 Centcelles, Cupola Mosaic: Steeple Chase and Christian Scenes (see also Colour Plate 2)

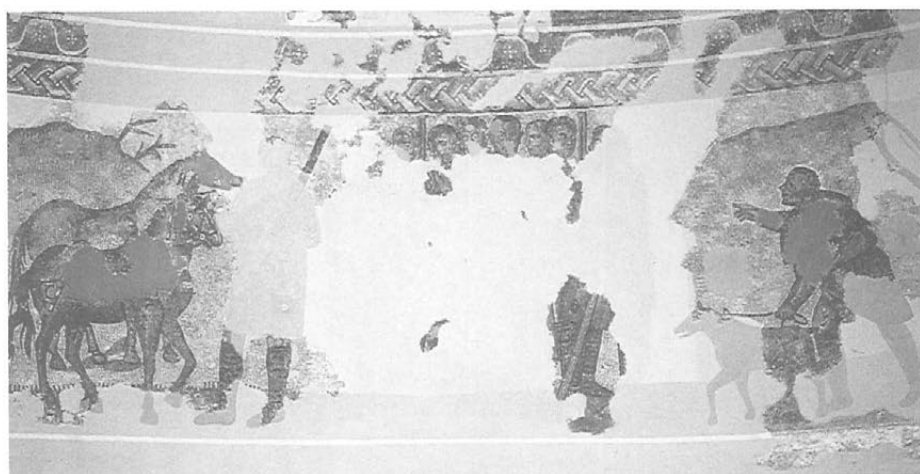


Fig. 10 Centcelles, Cupola Mosaic: the Steeple Chase



Fig. 11 Roma, S. Paolo fuori le mura, nave after Piranesi

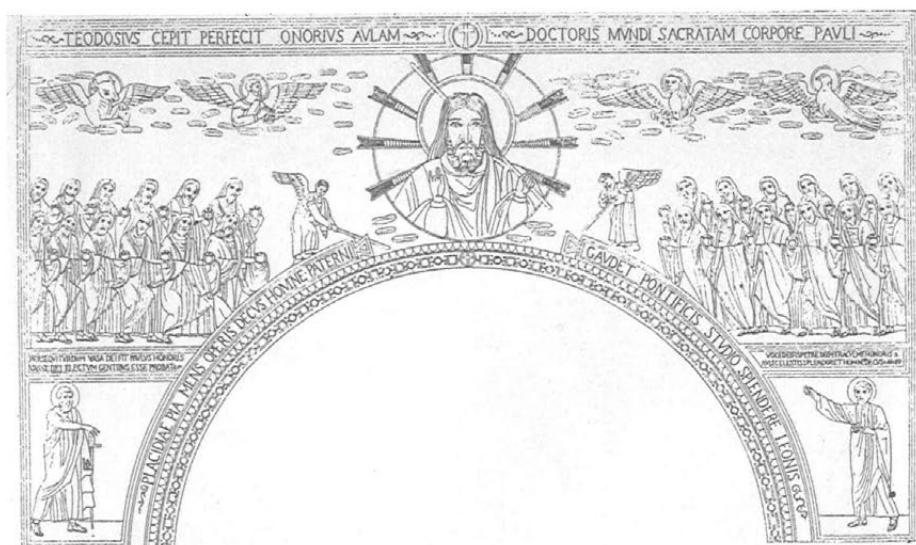


Fig. 12 Rome, S. Paolo fuori le mura, Sketch of the Triumphal Arch



Fig. 13 Rome, S. Maria Maggiore, nave, elevation

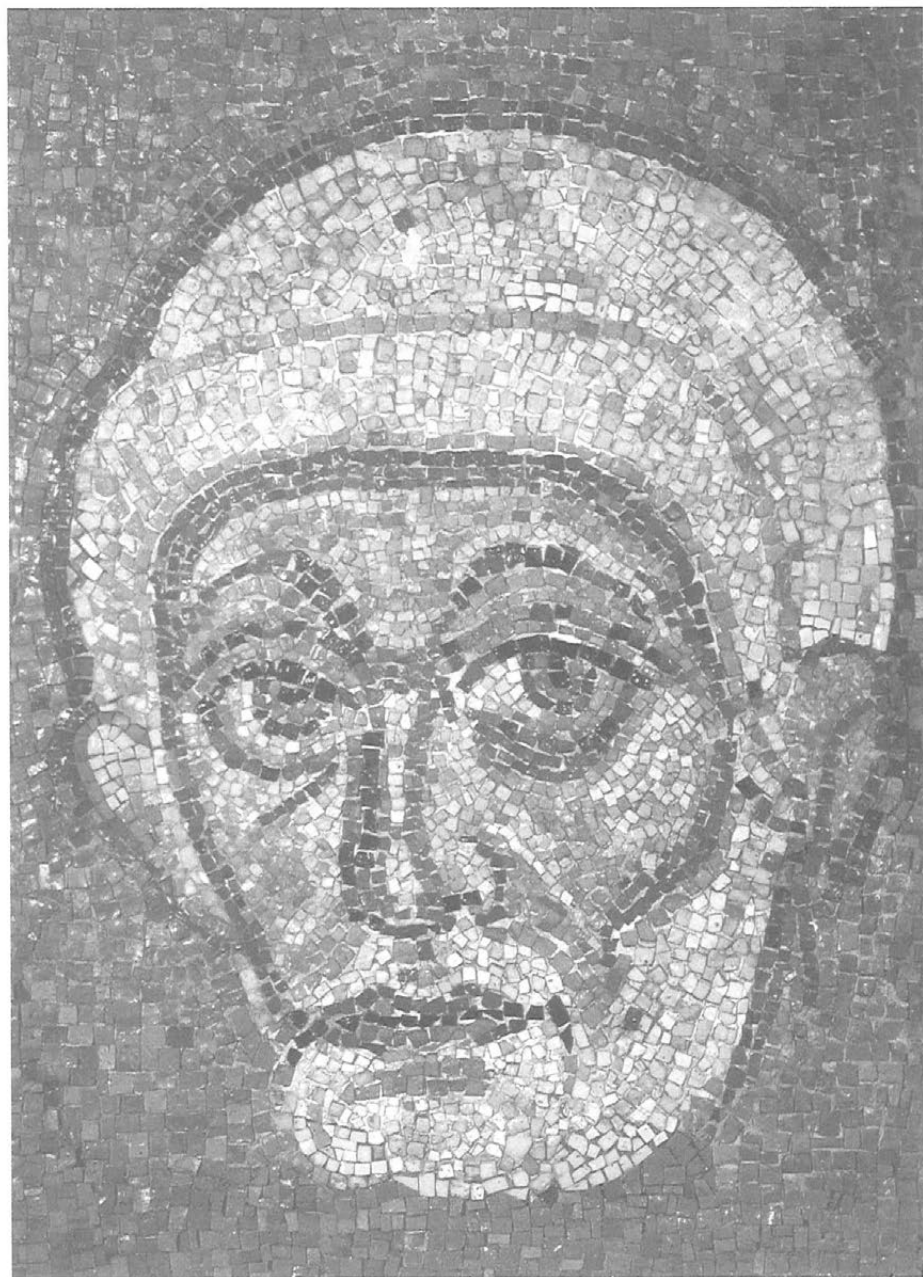


Fig. 14 Rome, S. Paolo fuori le mura, Head of St. Peter (today preserved in the Vatican)



Fig. 15 Rome, S. Maria Maggiore, Triumphal Arch



Fig. 16 Rome, S. Maria Maggiore, Triumphal Arch, Herod and the Magi

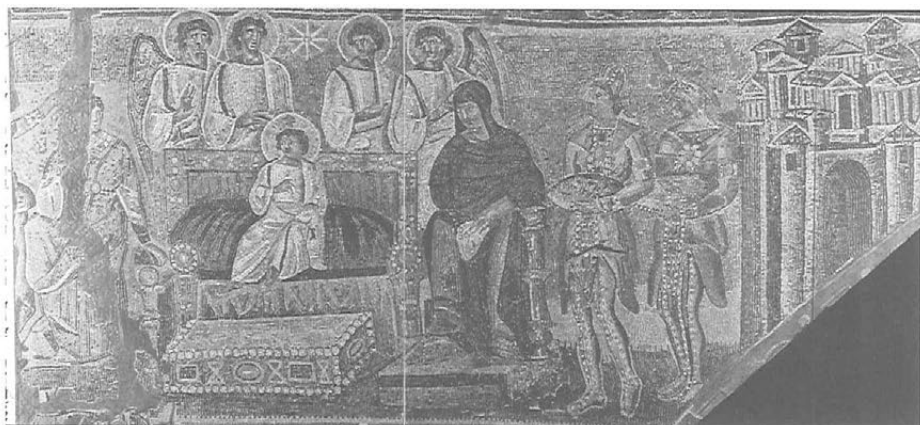


Fig. 17 Rome, S. Maria Maggiore, Triumphal Arch, Adoration of the Magi



Fig. 18 Rome, S. Maria Maggiore, Triumphal Arch, The Holy Family and Aphrodisius



Fig. 19 Ravenna, S. Apollinare Nuovo, elevation (see also Colour Plate 3)



Fig. 20 Ravenna, S. Apollinare Nuovo, Prophets



Fig. 21 Dura Europos, house of the Roman administration: Portrait of Heliodoros

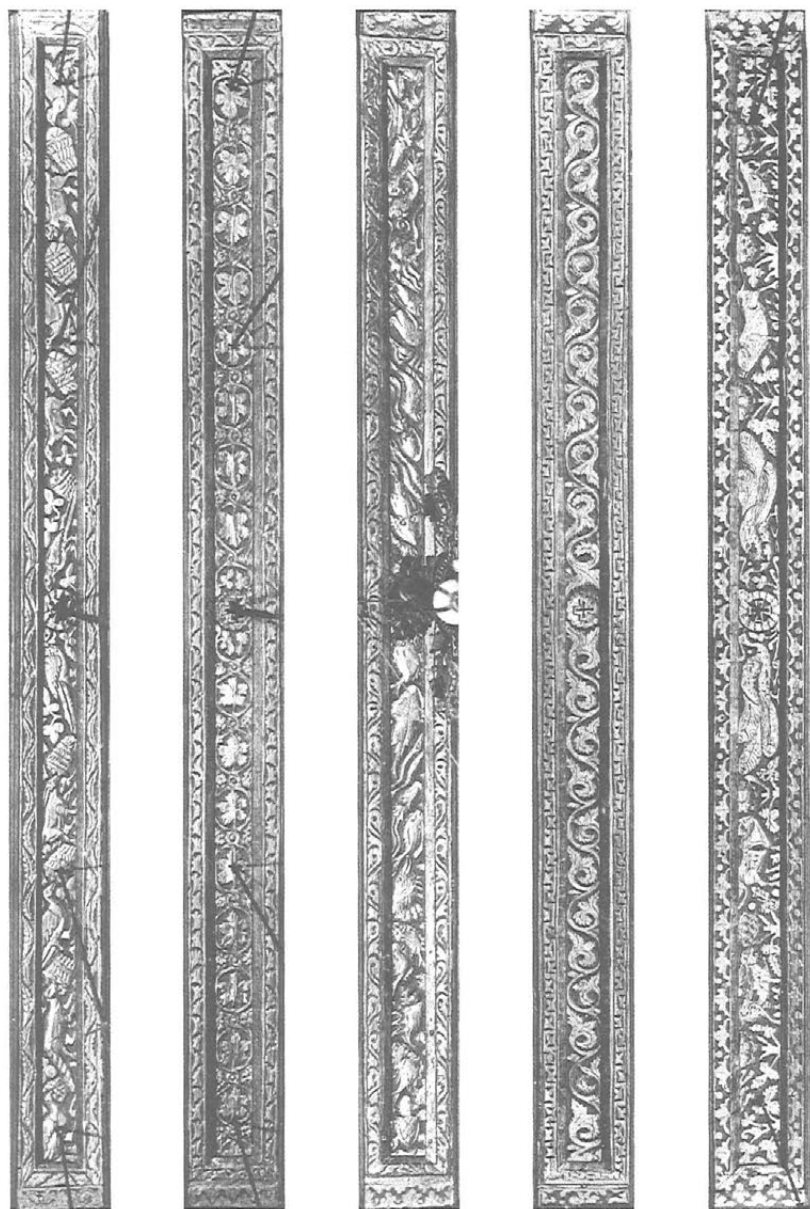


Fig. 22 Sinai, Monastery of S. Catherine, Wooden Beams of the Ceiling

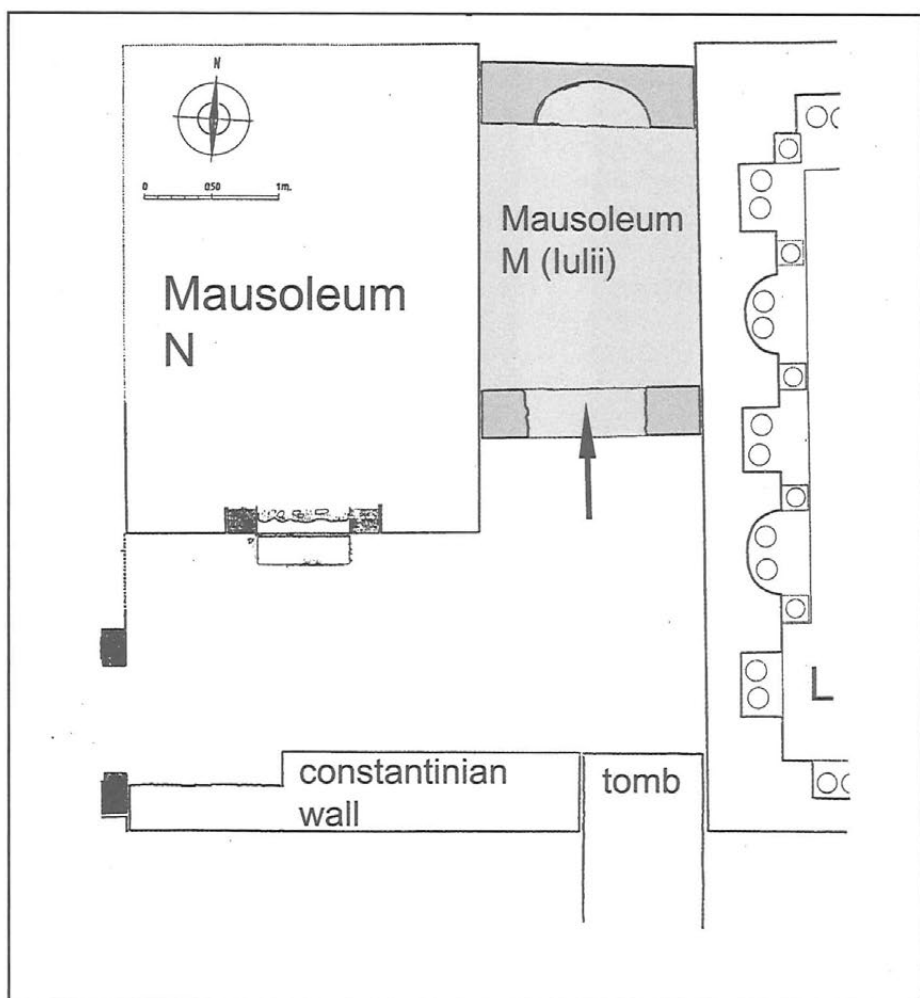


Fig. 23 Rome, St. Peter, Necropolis, Mausoleum M, Plan

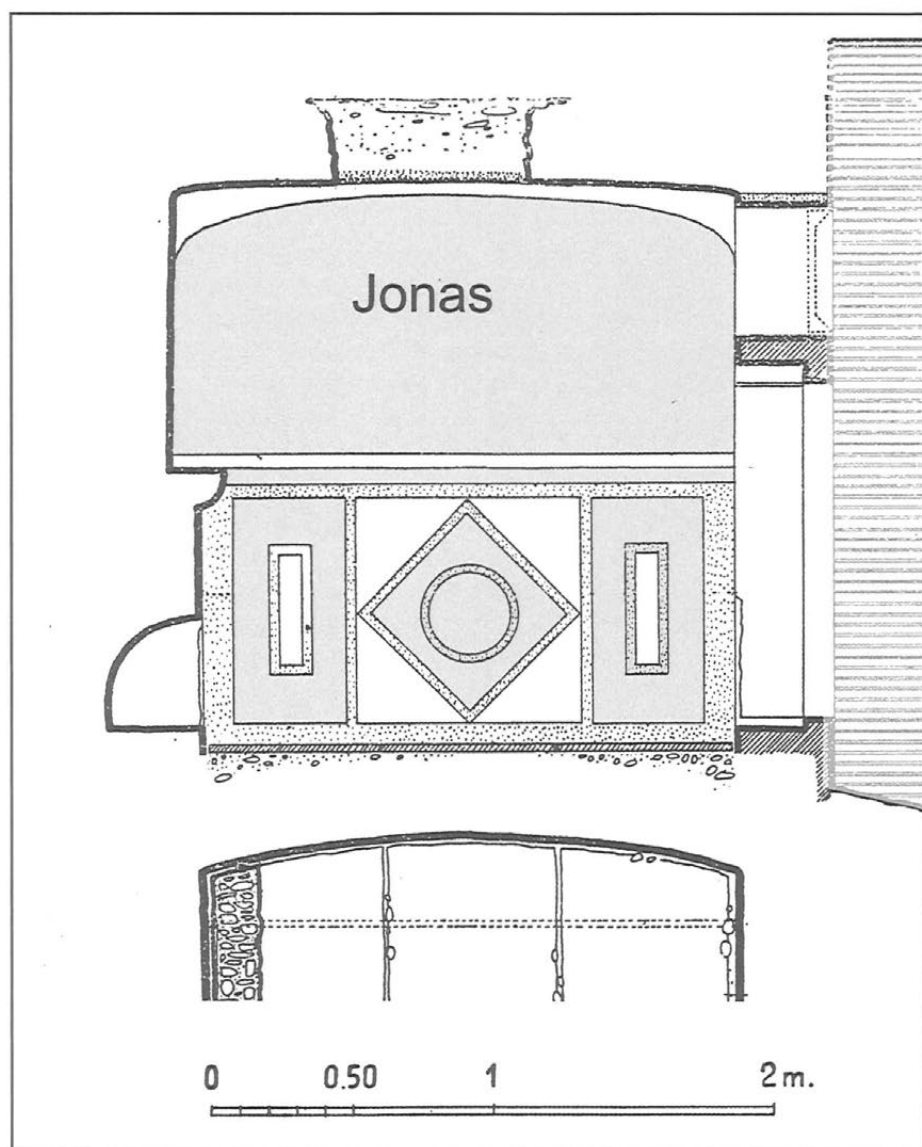


Fig. 24 Rome, St. Peter, Necropolis, Mausoleum M, Elevation

The Holy in the Dust: A Japanese View of Christendom's Cult of the Non-Representational

SHIGEBUMI TSUJI

In the *Sancta Sanctorum* of the Vatican Museum, one can come across a late antique wooden casket. When the lid is opened, what one finds inside is dirt and stones.¹ To know what one is seeing and to understand the meaning of these formless objects, one has to look at the well-known biblical images painted on the lid of the casket – they indicate that its holy contents are dirt and pebbles from the Holy Land. Thus the historical veracity of the pictures of the *Deus Incarnatus* on the lid is guaranteed by the presence of the mute, amorphous material inside the box. In other words, the pictorial eloquence and the silence of the material objects are mutually reflexive: open the casket and look at the dirt, and then close it again and look at the pictures. One might repeat this endlessly until the footprints of Jesus Christ faintly emerge on the surface of the dirt, but only in the mind's eye. The essential experience of the 'holy' dirt and pebbles is not a visual one: formlessly and possibly through the sense of touch, they mediate the once and always, invisible, carnal-spiritual presence of Jesus Christ.

Since late antique writings indicate the general acceptance of the neo-platonic denigration of matter, such a veneration of the invisible holy in non-representational matter is astonishing, as well as unprecedented in other contemporary religions. In what follows, after briefly reviewing the philosophical background concerning the view of materiality, I shall examine the nature of the above-mentioned practice in its historical and ritual context: that of Christian

¹ K. WEITZMANN, "Loca sancta and the representational arts of Palestine", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 28 (1974), pp. 36-50.

pilgrimage. Its theoretical justification, however, came to be based upon the central tenet of the Christian faith: that of the divine Christ taking on the materiality of human flesh so as to become perceptible to the human senses. The seventh-century John of Damascus, best known for his defense of the worship of images, first formulated this position, inverting generally accepted philosophical notions of materiality in a revolutionary way. As we shall suggest, very tentatively, there is reason to think that this sea-change of ideas accompanied a primordial awe for the feminine that the cult of the Virgin Mother Mary sanctified at the core of Christianity.

1. The Theological Contributions of John of Damascus

John of Damascus (650/660?-ca. 750) is best known as the Byzantine theologian who for the first time systematically laid the theoretical foundation of the defense of icon-veneration. Thanks to Andrew Louth's recent invaluable study,² and his new English translation of John's *De Imaginibus*,³ we now have a more precise and comprehensive view of the saint's intellectual activity and of the decisive effect his writings had in the history of the Byzantine Empire.

As is well known, John's writings continued to be quoted by the subsequent generations of iconodules, for instance by Theodore of Studios. And his theological contributions also came to be appreciated beyond the historical and geographical boundary between the East and the West: a number of medieval theologians, such as St. Thomas Aquinas, consulted John's writings in building what came to be accepted as orthodox doctrine in the West.

John's importance for the formation of medieval thinking does not contradict another equally persistent view, however, that he was not so much an original thinker like Saint Augustine of Hippo, as a great compiler of the theological tradition in his time. Louth clearly elucidates this point through his careful analysis of the Byzantine notion of tradition: "we see John not so much as one shaped by tradition, but as one who has given shape to what others have received as tradition, especially in determining their perception of the theological achievement of what came to be regarded as the golden age of the Fathers".⁴

² A. LOUTH, *St. John Damascene, Tradition and Originality in Byzantine Theology* (Oxford, 2002).

³ John of Damascus, *Three Treatises on the Divine Images*, tr. A. LOUTH (Crestwood, NY, 2003).

⁴ LOUTH, *St. John Damascene*, p. 16.

To recast Louth's view in my words: John of Damascus stands at a great watershed. We find in him, on the one hand, the culmination of the great patristic tradition of the late Antique and early Byzantine period, and on the other, an abundant fountainhead of the intellectual tradition from the Middle Byzantine period onward. Thus not only do we have, through John's prolific writings, a glimpse of the period prior to the seventh century, but we also find in him a proponent of the central issues that were taken up and articulated in later generations. In his defense of the veneration of images we see that his theological arguments are not limited to the issue of the icon as a portrait: he expanded the sacred beyond the icon as a representational image to include non-representational objects not made by human hands.

2. What Our Veneration and Reverencing Are Directed Toward

Let us first examine a few relevant passages in his *Three Treatises on the Divine Images*. First, in the Book I, 14, the author discusses different forms of our veneration (προσκύνησις).

The first is as a form of worship (κατὰ λατρείαν), which we offer to God, alone by nature worthy of veneration (i.e. προσκύνησις).⁵

Then, God is immediately followed by the entourage of "His friends and servants". They are the saints and martyrs, as John explains more concretely in the next Book II, 15:

For the saints are the army of the Lord ... If they are heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ and partakers of the divine glory and kingdom, how shall not the friends of Christ be also fellow partakers on earth of his glory?⁶

Book I, 14 concludes with references to the Old Testament personages who were said to be venerated: "such veneration is offered to others as a mark of honour (κατὰ τιμὴν)".

In the middle of this chapter, however, there are inserted references, not to the personages, but to "the places of God (ἢ τοῖς Θεοῦ τόποις)", as the objects of veneration. This apparent peculiarity will be discussed below. In the following Chapter 15, the author stresses that, while God himself is utterly un-

⁵ *On the Divine Images*, tr. LOUTH, pp. 27-28.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 71-72.

circumscribable, only the created can be copied as a shadow of the heavenly archetype; quoting Hebrews 8:5, he writes:

These things serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly sanctuary; for when Moses was about to erect the tabernacle, he was instructed by God, saying, "See that you make everything according to the pattern which was shown you on the mountain".⁷

John's allusion to the "pattern which was shown [to Moses] on the mountain", is obviously based on Exodus 25-31, in which God commands him on Mount Sinai to erect His tabernacle, prescribing in great detail how to prepare all the priestly costumes, cult utensils, images of the Cherubim, etc. In the following chapter 16, John again discusses these Old Testament cult objects, referring to Moses' commands to the Israelites to follow God's instructions in Exodus, 31-35.⁸ As Herbert Kessler has demonstrated, God's commandments regarding the erection of the tabernacle in Exodus provided strong support for the Christian defense and reverence of the icon, especially against the Jews. According to Kessler, a citation from the Old Testament in this context can be found already in the sixth century.⁹

3. *The Reappraisal of Matter in the Defense of Icon Veneration*

Perhaps the most important characteristic of John's defense of icon veneration is that he boldly associates the legitimacy of the making of cultic objects with the Christian belief in the Incarnation of Christ.¹⁰ The reason is that the flesh in which God became man was made of material elements, just as the tabernacle and its ornaments were made of a variety of materials.¹¹ At this point, John audaciously begins his reassessment of the notion of materiality. Thus, in a more detailed parallel to the passage in Book II, 14, he writes:

I do not venerate matter (Οὐ προσκυνῶ τῇ ὕλῃ), I venerate the fashioner of matter, who becomes matter for my sake, and in matter made his abode, and through matter worked my salvation. "For the Word became flesh and dwelt among us (Io 1, 14)". It is clear to all that flesh is matter and is a creature. *I reverence*

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 28-29.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 30-31.

⁹ H.L. KESSLER, *Spiritual Seeing: Picturing God's Invisibility in Medieval Art* (Philadelphia, 2000), esp. chapters 2-4, pp. 29-87.

¹⁰ LOUTH, *St. John Damascene*, p. 202.

¹¹ *On the Divine Images*, I, 16, tr. LOUTH, pp. 29-30.

therefore matter and I hold in respect and venerate that through which my salvation has come about (Σέβω οὖν τὴν ὕλην καὶ διαιδούς ἄγω, καὶ προσκυνῶ, δι' ἧς ἡ σωτηριά μου γέγονε). I reverence it not as God, but as filled with divine energy and grace" (Italicized by the present author).¹²

Evidently, when John wrote his defense of icon veneration, Christians in the former Eastern territories of Byzantium were constantly being challenged by Jews and Muslims about the legitimacy of the practice. Among other reasons, the very materiality of man-made objects roused iconoclasts to fierce attacks upon Christian iconodules. John's text appears to reflect such reasoning:

Do not abuse matter; for it is not dishonourable; this is the view of the Manichees. The only thing that is dishonourable is something that does not have its origin from God, but is our own discovery If because of the law you dishonour images and prohibit them as fashioned from matter, see what Scripture says ¹³

4. Matter and Materiality in Classical and Early Christian Thought

The history of the debate on the issue of matter and materiality is extraordinarily complicated. However, to understand the significance of John's reappraisal of matter, one has to bear in mind the course of the debate through many long generations of Greek and Latin philosophers.

Generally speaking, Christians as well as Muslims and Jews had remained quite sceptical in recognizing the value of matter. John's 'exaltation' of materiality must therefore have been experienced as extremely challenging at that time. Whence did this general negative attitude toward matter come? Its sources are in the classical period.¹⁴

¹² *On the Divine Images*, tr. LOUTH, pp. 70-71. At the beginning of this paragraph, John clearly distinguishes the "reverence" directed toward material objects from the "veneration" offered exclusively to God Himself. If so, it is obviously contradictory, as one reads at the end of the same paragraph, that one not only reverences (σέβω) but also venerates (προσκύνω) that through which salvation has come about, i.e. matter. In this regard, cf. Book III, 33-40, *ibid.*, pp. 106-110.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

¹⁴ For a layman in the history of philosophy, a good starting point is to be found in P. Merlan's chapter on the Old Academy: P. MERLAN, "The Old Academy", in: *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy*, ed. A.H. ARMSTRONG (Cambridge, 1967), pp. 14-38.

Aristotle's presentation of Platonic ontology¹⁵ is best characterized by the well-known Platonic dichotomy of sensibles-intelligibles, to which should be added the dichotomy of the modes of cognition, namely sensation *versus* *noein* (knowing). Plato had actually inserted the objects of "mathematics" (τὰ μαθηματικά) between the two, thus forming a trichotomy. But the dualism is 'vertical': from the One to the Indefinite Dyad.

Aristotle likened this dualism to the set of formal and material causes in his own system, and these causes, in turn, are identified with the principles of good and evil. Here, one must be reminded that, while Plato never used the term 'matter/material' (ὕλη) to denote his Indefinite Dyad, Aristotle became the first who recast the Platonic Indefinite Dyad as matter/material. In fact, Aristotle went so far as to call the Indefinite Dyad 'non-being'.¹⁶ Thus, from the very beginning, one side of the Platonic/Aristotelian dichotomy – whether the sensibles, the Indefinite Dyad, or the material – was regarded as evil or even non-being, since it opposed the absolute Good, the One.

Plotinus inherited this notion of the sensible. After developing his eloquent statements on the *pleroma* of the Ideal-Form as the source of beauty in the Sixth Tractate of the First Book of the *Enneads*,¹⁷ in the following Eighth Tractate, – almost deliberately in contrast to his eulogy of the fulfilment of the One – he harshly condemns matter as non-being and as the source of ugliness and evil, saying:

Matter has not even existence whereby to have some part in Good: Being is attributed to it by an accident of words: the truth would be that it has Non-Being.

Mere lack brings merely Not-Goodness: Evil demands the absolute lack – though, of course, any very considerable shortcoming makes the ultimate fall possible and is already, in itself, an evil.¹⁸

This view is responsible for the negative conception of matter in later generations committed to Neoplatonism, whether among Christians or among others. It must be noted, however, that Plotinus does not seem to be thoroughly consistent in condemning matter as evil. Before examining this as it appears in a particularly complex passage in his exposition of Platonic passages in the

¹⁵ *Met.* I, VI, 987b–988a (tr. In: Aristotle, *The Metaphysics*, ed. and tr. H. TREDENNICK (Cambridge, MA, 1975: *Loeb Classical Library* 271), pp. 42–49).

¹⁶ MERLAN, "The Old Academy", p. 17.

¹⁷ Plotinus, *The Six Enneads*, tr. S. MACKENNA and B.S. PAGE (Chicago, 1952), pp. 21 ff.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

Timaeus, we must briefly look at the beginning of the debate about ‘matter’ in Plato.¹⁹

A. Plato

As indicated above, Plato never used the term ‘matter’ to denote the lowest rank of his ontological hierarchy. In his later years, however, he did devote a large part of the *Timaeus* to clarifying the role of the sensibles in the creation of the universe. Thus the great cosmological drama of the creation of the universe in the *Timaeus* is dominated by two major elements: the One, the eternal, unchanging, and invisible supreme being on the one hand, and the artificer, the Demiurge, or the creator of the universe on the other. The Demiurge always looks up to the One, in whom he finds the eternal models. Then, he makes the copies of them in effort to assimilate them as much as possible to the model.

The One and the artificer, then, are the real causes of all existence that consists of, first, the Model Form (παραδείγματος εἶδος) and, second, its Copy (μιμημα δὲ παραδείγματος δεύτερον). Thereupon, however, Plato suddenly confesses that he is facing an *aporia* in scrutinizing the Third element:

(for whereas then) we distinguished two Forms, we must now declare another third kind (νῦν δὲ τρίτον ἄλλο γένος ἡμῖν δηλωτέρον). A Third Kind we did not at that time distinguish, considering that those two [Forms] were sufficient;

But now the argument seems to compel us to try to reveal by words a Form that is baffling and obscure. What essential property, then, are we to conceive it to possess?²⁰

Then, Plato becomes involved in a long and complicated course of investigation, until he succeeds in describing these three Forms in a more or less articulate form in 51E~52E. The following is a brief excerpt of the relevant passages in the *Timaeus*:

One Kind is the self-identical Form, invisible and imperceptible by sense. A second Kind is that which is named after the former and similar thereto, an object perceptible by sense, generated, becoming, perishing, apprehensible by Opinion

¹⁹ On this, see: A.H. ARMSTRONG, “Plotinus”, in: *Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy*, pp. 256-258.

²⁰ *Timaeus*, 48E-49A. This and the following passages from the *Timaeus* are quoted from the translation by R.G. Bury in: Plato, *Timaeus, Critias, Clitopho, Menexenus, Epistulae*, ed. and tr. R.G. BURY (Cambridge, MA, and London, 1929: Loeb Classical Library 234), pp. 113 ff.

with the aid of Sensation. Then, there is a third Kind. This is ever-existing Place (τρίτον δὲ αὐτὸ γένος ὃν τὸ τῆς χώρας αἰεὶ), which provides room for all things that have birth, itself being apprehensible by a kind of bastard reasoning, barely an object of belief. It is especially important that this Place, the third Kind, was existing, together with self-identical Form and its Copy, even before the Heaven came into existence, as the Nurse of Becoming (ἡ τῆς γενέσεως τίθηνη).²¹

These three Kinds are often personified by Plato, as in: "Moreover, it is proper to liken the Recipient to the Mother, the Source to the Father and what is engendered between these two to the Offspring".²² Thus, as a distinct *persona* among what we may call the generative triad by Plato, this Third Kind is none but the Mother, the Nurse, and the Place, existing before Creation and generating all creatures:

Wherefore, let us not speak of her that is the Mother and Receptacle of this generated world, which is perceptible by sight and all the senses (τὴν τοῦ γεγονότος ὁρατοῦ καὶ πάντως αἰσθητοῦ μητέρα καὶ ὑποδοχὴν) if we describe her as a Kind invisible and unshaped (ἀνόρατον εἶδος τι καὶ ἄμορφον), all-receptive and in some most perplexing and most baffling way partaking of the intelligible, we shall describe her truly.²³

B. Plotinus

Plotinus adamantly opposed the Aristotelian solution of the union of matter with Form and insistently condemned matter as non-being and evil. It is evident, however, that he was at the same time much concerned with how he should interpret the Third Kind in the *Timaeus*. This eventually led him to alter, to a considerable degree, both the traditional Platonic/Aristotelian definition of matter on the one hand, and the function of the Third Kind in the *Timaeus*, on the other.

Thus, in the *Third Ennead*, VI, 13, he directly quotes the pertinent passage in the *Timaeus*, 51-52²⁴ and, quite boldly, conflates the Platonic Third Kind with the traditional notion of matter. Let us observe how subtly the deviation from the traditional Platonic/Aristotelian notion of matter takes place:

²¹ *Timaeus*, 52 A-D, tr. pp. 122-125.

²² *Timaeus*, 50D, tr. pp. 116-119..

²³ *Timaeus*, 51A, tr. pp. 118-119.

²⁴ Plotinus, *The Six Enneads*, tr. MACKENNA and PAGE, pp. 114 ff.

In what sense, then, is it [matter] said to elude form? By very nature and forever? But does not this precisely mean that it never ceases to be itself, in other words that its one form is an invincible formlessness? In no other sense has Plato's dictum any value to those that invoke it.

Matter (we read) is "the receptacle and nurse of all generation".

Now if matter is such a receptacle and nurse, all generation is distinct from it; and since all the changeable lies in the realm of generation, matter, existing before all generation, must exist before all change.

We must remember that, in the ontology of the Old Academy, matter was identical with sensibles. Now, Plotinus in the end alienates matter from the Platonic/Aristotelian Indefinite Dyad or the sensibles completely. As he skilfully demonstrates with the metaphor of mirror and air, matter is no longer an object of sense:²⁵

Yes: if we eliminated the Authentic Existents from this Sphere [of Matter], nothing of all now seen in sense would appear one moment long. Here, the mirror itself is seen, for it is itself an Ideal-Form of a Kind [i.e. has some degree of Real Being]: but bare Matter, which is no Idea, is not a visible thing; if it were, it would have been visible in its own character before anything else appeared upon it. The condition of matter may be illustrated by that of air penetrated by light and remaining, even so, unseen because it is invisible whatever happens.²⁶

True, Plato himself had suggested that this 'matter' itself is "a Kind invisible and unshaped", but Plotinus decisively deprived matter of any possibility to engage with the sensibles. Thereby, quite understandably, in the predominant Plotinian notion, matter has lost the generative power which Plato had attributed to her as her essential function:

So, the appellation "Recipient and Nurse" is the better description; matter is the mother only in the sense indicated; it has no begetting power. But probably the

²⁵ Plotinus, *The Six Enneads*, Third Ennead, VI, 13, tr. p. 115. Armstrong describes the process in a compact form, summarizing Book VI of the *Ennead* as following: "And the descent [of the Soul] can only have a stop ... where there can be no longer any unity, goodness or reality at all, at the baffling quasi-existence of matter, in which the last and lowest forms ... are present like reflections in an invisible and formless mirror. These forms of bodies do not, as in Aristotle, unite with matter to form a single reality ... It is the passive receptacle of forms, a sort of medium in which they are present which remains totally unchanged and unaffected by them ...". Then, Armstrong emphasizes the utter negativity of Plotinus' Matter, as this is totally void of reality and goodness, concluding: "The Matter of the sense-world is for Plotinus absolute evil" (ARMSTRONG, "Plotinus", pp. 256-257).

²⁶ Plotinus, *The Six Enneads*, Third Ennead, VI, 13, tr. p. 115.

term Mother is used by those who think of a Mother as matter to the offspring, as a container only, giving nothing to them But if this Mother does give anything to the offspring it does so not in its quality as matter but as being an Ideal-Form; for only the Idea is generative; the contrary Kind is sterile.²⁷

C. Augustine

Augustine of Hippo, too, dealt with the issue of matter.²⁸ He begins his inquiry at the beginning of the Twelfth Book of the *Confessions*, when he first takes up the subject of the Heaven of Heavens in Psalm 112, 16, saying:

Where art thou, O heaven [Heaven of Heavens] which we see not? In comparison whereof, all this heaven which we see, is but mere earth. For this heaven is wholly corporeal, which ... hath in such wise received its portion of beauty in these lower parts (*hoc enim totum corporeum non ubique totum ita cepit speciem pulchram in novissimis*), the bottom whereof is this earth of ours ²⁹

According to the Scripture, however, not only the second Heaven but also another Earth remains invisible, as this had already existed before visible heaven and earth were created. Augustine writes:

And now was this earth invisible and without form, and there was, I know not what profoundness of the deep, upon which there was no light, because as yet it had no shape. Therefore didst thou command it to be written, that darkness was upon the face of the deep ³⁰

He thus identifies this invisible earth with “unshapen matter”. The remarkable thing about his view of matter is that it is not non-being, as Plotinus had tried very hard to prove:

²⁷ Plotinus, *The Six Enneads*, Third Ennead, VI, 19, tr. p. 221.

²⁸ I am much obliged to Prof. Paul Dutton for his kind reminder to me of the importance of the Twelfth Book of *Confessions* in this regard, and further providing me with the materials, textual as well as visual, regarding the notion of matter in early Latin philosophers. Regarding Augustine's view of matter in the *Confessions*, I found A. Solignac's commentary on it very useful: *Œuvres de Saint Augustin*, ed. M. SKUTELLA, vol. 14 (Paris, 1992), pp. 592 ff., especially pp. 599-603.

²⁹ *Confessiones*, 12. 2. The English translation of the *Confessiones* is taken from Augustine, *Confessions*, ed. and tr. W. WATTS, 2 vols. (London and Cambridge, MA, 1912: *Loeb Classical Library* 26-27), 2, pp. 288-291.

³⁰ Augustine, *Confessions*, 12. 3, ed. and tr. *ibid.*, pp. 290-291.

Hast thou not taught me, Lord, that before thou shapedst and diversifiedst this unshapen matter (*informis materia*) there was nothing, neither colour, nor figure, nor body, nor spirit? And yet was there not altogether an absolute nothing; for there was a certain unshapedness, without any form in it (*non tamen omnino nihil: erat quaedam informitas sine ulla specie*).³¹

The invisible and shapeless earth that already existed before the creation of this visible universe significantly differs, however, from the completely sterile “receptacle” of Plotinus. For the Christian philosopher saves her generative capacity when he continues:

In which words is the unshapedness noted unto us; (that such capacities may hereby be drawn on by degrees, as are not able to conceive so utter a privation of all the form of it, as should not yet come so low as a mere nothing:) out of which another heaven was to be created, together with a visible and well-formed earth, and the beautiful waters ...³²

After a prolonged effort to understand this shapeless entity, Augustine returns to Gn 1, 1-2, since it is specifically relevant to the issue of matter: “And the earth was invisible and without shape, and darkness was upon the deep”, and then reaches a quite lucid solution:

... two things I find that thou hast made, not within the compass of times; ... One, which is so formed as that without any ceasing to contemplate thee, without any interval of change, though in itself it be changeable, yet having been never changed, it may thoroughly forever enjoy eternity and unchangeableness; the other which was so formless, as that it had not wherewithal to be changed out of one form into another But this thou didst not leave to be thus formless; because before all days, thou in the beginning didst create heaven and earth; the two things that I spake of. “And the earth was invisible and without shape, and darkness was upon the deep (*terra autem invisibilis erat et incompressa et tenebrae super abyssum*)”.³³

³¹ Augustine, *Confessions*, 12. 3, ed. and tr. *ibid.*, pp. 292-293.

³² Augustine, *Confessions*, 12. 12, ed. and tr. *ibid.*, pp. 310-311. I have slightly amended the translation.

³³ Augustine, *Confessions*, 12. 12, ed. and tr. W. WATTS, pp. 308-311.

5. *Matter and Loci Sancti in the Writings of John of Damascus*

From the foregoing brief discussion of Augustine's argument about matter, it is evident that his belief in God's creation of the universe encouraged him to view the nature of matter in a manner different from Plotinus. But since Plato developed his notion of the third Kind through his elaborate exposition of the creation myth in the *Timaeus*, Augustine's use of the Biblical narrative of creation in a philosophical argument on matter may also hark back to the classical tradition.

Similarly, John of Damascus proclaims without hesitation in the Book II, 13 of his *De Imaginibus*:

You abuse matter and call it worthless. So do the Manichees, but the divine Scripture proclaims that it is good. For it says, "and God saw everything that he had made, and behold it was exceedingly good". I therefore confess that matter is something made by God and that it is good; you, however, if you say it is evil, either do not confess that it is from God, or make God the cause of evils. See, therefore, what the divine Scripture says about matter, which you call worthless.³⁴

And accordingly, in both Book I and II – following the list of the sacred objects related to the Exodus and the eulogy of matter – John of Damascus gives another list of sacred objects. This time, however, not all of the included items correspond to the Biblical passages, but, more importantly, point to the special significance of certain specific contemporary kinds of matter.

First, there are "places" (*loci*), which are undoubtedly associated with the pilgrims in the Holy Land in the pre-iconoclastic period, and then, secondly, liturgical objects that had been traditionally venerated by the Church. In Book II, 14, John enumerates them in the form of a series of questions:

Is not the thrice-precious and thrice-blessed wood of the Cross matter? Is not the holy and august mountain, the place of the skull, matter? Is not the life-giving and life-bearing rock, the holy tomb, the source of the resurrection, matter? Are not the ink and the parchment of the Gospels matter? Is not the life-bearing table, which offers to us the bread of life, matter? Are not the gold and the silver matter, out of which crosses and holy tablets are fashioned and also bowls? And, before all these things, is not the body and blood of my Lord matter? Either do away with reverence

³⁴ *The Divine Images*, tr. LOUTH, pp. 69-70. In this respect, my interpretation of John's notion of matter differs slightly from that of LOUTH, *St. John Damascene*, pp. 201-202.

and veneration for all these or submit to the tradition of the Church and allow the veneration of images of God and friends of God ...³⁵

There are several *loci sancti* among the approximately twelve items in this additional list: though we are not sure what the “holy and august mountain” exactly means – could it be Mt. Sinai or Mt. Tabor? or is it Calvary? – there are the Rocks of the Nativity and/or the Holy Sepulchre. We ought to remember that a passage in Book I, 14 has already stated that not only the martyr saints but also *loci sancti* are to be venerated:

Then there is the veneration offered to the places of God, as David said, “Let us venerate the place, where his feet stood”,³⁶ or things sacred to Him, as Israel venerated the tabernacle ...³⁷

The humble pilgrims, then, believed that the Holy Spirit issued from heaven, and descended in the closed womb of the Virgin *Theotokos*, the interior of which one could neither touch nor see. They knew that their *Deus Incarnatus* was born in the dark cave, and then buried in another dark cave, from which He ascended to heaven. It was this earth, the realm of matter, “*terra autem invisibilis et incompressa et tenebrae super abyssum*”, where all these things were generated.

The fragment of the True Cross at the top of the list suggests that John’s notion of materiality is deeply rooted in the pilgrims’ practices in the Holy Land as well in the liturgy that accompanied these.³⁸ In this context, it is also significant that John’s admiration of the martyr saints continues in his exhortation to build *martyria* and to decorate them. More specifically, he emphasizes the veneration of the saints’ earthly remains, a Christian innovation that clearly differed from the older Roman and Jewish view of dead bodies:

³⁵ *On the Divine Images*, tr. LOUTH, pp. 70-71. Here John specifically mentions the pages of the Gospelbook written in ink (τό μέλαν), and in doing so, he certainly follows the example from the preceding century. As KESSLER, *Spiritual Seeing*, p. 30 shows, there is a certain diversity of opinion regarding the materiality of the pages of the Gospelbook between a late seventh century Armenian tract by Vrt’anes K’ert’ogh and the later *Nouthesia Gerontos* from the mid-eighth century: while the former regards the parchment pages as venerable objects in their materiality, the latter seems to avoid such a materialist view.

³⁶ Ps 131, 7.

³⁷ *On the Divine Images*, tr. LOUTH, pp. 27-28.

³⁸ Cf., e.g. the report on the liturgy of the vigil on Holy Friday in the Holy Land by Egeria: Egeria, *Itinerarium Egeriae*, Egeria, mit Auszügen aus Petrus Diaconus, De Locis sanctis, 35. 3-36. 5, tr. G. RÖWEKAMP and D. THÖNNES (Freiburg im Br., 1995: *Fontes Christiani* 20), pp. 270 ff.

If you raise temples to the saints of God, then put up trophies to them as well. Of old a temple was not erected in the name of human beings, nor was the death of just ones celebrated, but they were buried, and anyone who touched a corpse was reckoned unclean, even Moses himself. Now the memorials of the saints are celebrated. The corpse of Jacob was buried, but that of Stephen is celebrated. Either, therefore, give up the festal memorials of the saints, which are contrary to the old law, or accept the images, which, you say, are contrary to the law.³⁹

This accords perfectly with what Professor Peter Brown demonstrated years ago in his widely read *Cult of the Saints*.⁴⁰ According to Brown, the veneration of the dead bodies of the saints is the very characteristic that distinguishes the Christian religious practice from the preceding Roman customs. It should not be overlooked, however, that Brown's statement basically concerns the Late Antique and Early Byzantine periods. Therefore, John of Damascus' approval of the veneration of the dead, together with his special notes on geographical places, must be taken as a retrospective view of the early tradition established long before the time of the dispute over icons.

As we saw in the passage quoted above from Book II, 14 of *On the Divine Images*, John boldly includes material things among the objects of veneration. This is clearly inconsistent, however, with his previous argument that material being should not be venerated but revered. The apparent inconsistency may reflect the actuality of the pilgrims' practice of the veneration of sacred objects, where even *loci sancti*, material objects, were *venerated*. Pierre Maraval reports that the pilgrims visiting the Holy Land frequently genuflected (προσκύνησις) in devotion, not only before the relics and icons, but also to honour the holy ground where the pilgrim walked, stood, and knelt. He discusses at length discrepancies between theologians' efforts to establish distinction between 'veneration' and 'reverence', and the pilgrims' actual practices.⁴¹

Notwithstanding John of Damascus' elaborate philosophical explanation, then, pilgrims did not in fact discriminate, as he would have expected, between the invisible divine nature and the visible, even tangible, objects. In their veneration of icons and relics, they not only looked at them but also touched and kissed them. And they did the same to the sacred mountains, holy caves, and – as we saw at the beginning of this paper – venerated even the earth on which Christ had walked.

³⁹ *On the Divine Images*, 1. 21, tr. LOUTH, p. 35.

⁴⁰ P.L. BROWN, *The Cult of the Saints* (Chicago, 1981), especially chapter 1, "The holy and the grave", pp. 1-22.

⁴¹ P. MARAVAIL, *Lieux saints et pèlerinages d'Orient* (Paris, 1985), pp. 145-148 and *passim*.

6. Matter, Feminine Generativity, and the Defense of Icon Veneration

The last, but not the least important, fact to be mentioned is that, as Louth rightly emphasized, John, quite independently of his predecessors, introduced the doctrine of Incarnation into the theory of the defense of the icon. It seems to us, however, that the Christological development of his theory of icon runs parallel to his reassessment of matter discussed above. Also, we must remember that, whether from negative or positive point of view, matter had been discussed with regard to its generative capacity. Plato in the *Timaeus* was so concerned with the issue that he called matter the Mother, the Nurse of all the created. By contrast, Plotinus attempted to prove matter's sterility. Although Augustine saved her generative capacity from Plotinus' condemnation, we find no direct association of matter with feminine fecundity in his *Confessions*. However, he often uses impressive symbolic images of spiritual fecundity, and feminine personalities play a dominant role in his life and his writings. The vision-like experience of the personification of Continence who appears shortly before his conversion is one example:

For on that side which I set my face towards, and whither I trembled to go, was that chaste dignity of Continence discovered; cheerful was she, but not dissolutely pleasant, honestly coaxing me to come to her, and doubt nothing: yea stretching forth those devout hands of hers, so full of the multitudes of good examples, both to receive and to embrace me. There were in company with her very many both young men and maidens, ... and Continence herself in every one of them, not barren at all, but a fruitful mother of children, her joys, by thee her husband, O Lord.⁴²

What we see in all this – the Christianization of the classical notion of matter, the institution of the veneration of Theotokos, and the rise of the pilgrimage to the Holy Land – are signs of a revolution in the world of ideas. It accompanied the rise of a new religious mentality in the first quarter of the fifth century, when even the Imperial court was dominated by powerful feminine characters. This change of orientation is the background of the varieties of visual allusions, symbolic or metaphoric, that surface in the discussion of matter in John of Damascus' *De Imaginibus*.

⁴² Augustine, *Confessions*, 8. 11, ed. and tr. WATTS, pp. 458-461.

7. *The Visuality of the Early Pilgrims*

John's notion of matter, however, has another feature, which sharply distinguishes it from that of his predecessors': he almost completely identifies matter with the sensibles, as if matter were no more than a general concept designating all existent sensibles. True, Plato in the *Timaeus* discussed his third Kind in conjunction with the ever-changing four elements – basically derived from Empedocles –, but he did not, it is said, ignore the distinction between these elements as the objects of sensation, and matter is 'invisible' and still 'partaking of the intelligible'.⁴³

John's idiosyncratic notion of matter perhaps reflects his unique attitude toward the immaterial and incorporeal: he asserts that "in comparison with God all beings have a certain density and materiality, for God alone is truly immaterial and incorporeal".⁴⁴ If so, this must have been the reason that he felt no need to separate, as Plotinus had done, matter as the invisible receptacle from all the sensibles as visible objects of sensation.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to reconstruct thoroughly the changing aspects of the notion of matter from Plotinus to John of Damascus in the course of the Christianization of the classical tradition. Here, I am not in position to explain how and when the severe distinction between matter and the sensibles in the Late Antiquity became relaxed in the seventh century. This appears a decadent form of the philosophical subtlety characteristic of Plotinus and Augustine. Yet, when John of Damascus wrote his defense of icons, the doctrine of the Incarnation was the real foundation of his theology. Since God Himself took on a human body that definitely belonged to the realm of the sensibles, attention is now directed toward where and how Christ became flesh in reality, and where and how He lived, walked, spoke, and died. In other words, the faithful became concerned where and how He became visible. At this moment, when protracted Christological disputes had lost their force, both clergy and monastic leaders were pressed to respond to the vast demand for information about this from the entire Christian population. Proofs of the reality of the Incarnation that were needed, rather than reflections upon the philosophical pursuit of matter as the invisible receptacle.

Accordingly, Georgia Frank rightly begins her argument about the pilgrim's gaze prior to the *De Imaginibus* with the admonition of Clement of Alexandria in the second century against an aesthetic approach to the cognition of the

⁴³ Plato, *Timaeus*, 51, A-B. Cf. the Introduction by R.G. BURY, pp. 10 ff., where Bury also applies the term "Platonic matter".

⁴⁴ See the discussion on invisible beings by LOUTH, *St. John Damascene*, pp. 120-123.

divinity. Only less than a century later, does it turn out that “so many Christian had travelled to Jerusalem to see, touch, and smell the holy places that it would appear that God was, indeed, visible and tactile. Christian pilgrims found ways to experience what Clement and Christians before him considered an impossibility”.⁴⁵

Before examining Frank’s thesis, however, a brief look is necessary at the present state of research on the gaze of pilgrims before the Christian era as it has been demonstrated by Jaś Elsner in an article published simultaneously with that of Frank.⁴⁶ Actually, the recent focus upon the viewer’s gaze originated in the discipline of the semiotic art history established by Norman Bryson in the 1980s. Thus Elsner justifiably quotes Bryson’s basic proposition:

Between subject and object is inserted the entire sum of discourses which make up visibility ... and make visibility different from vision. Between retina and world is inserted a screen of signs, a screen consisting of all the multiple discourses on vision built into the social arena.⁴⁷

It must be noted, however, that Elsner’s approach toward the issue of viewer’s gaze goes a little further than an emphasis on the role of discourse. By comparing reports of ancient pilgrims such as Pausanias, Lucian, and others, Elsner shows how such ritual-centred visibility differs from the visibility of naturalism: “Pilgrim-viewers are already taken out of their normal social realities through rituals that effect the body itself and also the more interiorized sense of an individual’s subjectivity”.⁴⁸

Accordingly, although the gaze of the ancient pilgrims must have been primarily oriented by layers of discourses – their knowledge of myths and sermons by priest, for instance –, it was still necessary, Elsner asserts, to shape their gaze into the depth of an individual’s subjectivity through ritual practices. In this respect, Elsner’s emphasis on the topographical and architectural settings of the ancient *loci sancti* is very valuable for understanding the liturgical practices at the Christian sacred places in the early Christian period. Thus, after analyzing the topographical and architectural description of the precinct of Olympia by Pausanias, Elsner concludes:

⁴⁵ G. FRANK, “The pilgrim’s gaze in the age before icons”, in: *Visibility Before and Beyond the Renaissance, Seeing as Others Saw*, ed. R. NELSON (Cambridge, 2000), p. 98.

⁴⁶ J. ELSNER, “Between mimesis and divine power: Visibility in the Greco-Roman world”, in: *Visibility Before and Beyond the Renaissance*, pp. 45-69.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 61-62.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

What matters to him, in effect, is not a topography of geographical accuracy, ... but a topography of ritual correctness in which the temporal unfolding of a series of sacred actions becomes the dominant frame for his account. ... In reading Pausanias on the altars, we move from altar to altar in a vicarious re-enactment of Pausanias's own participation in an ancient ritual activity that was repeated, so we are told "every month".⁴⁹

Two centuries after Pausanias, this is exactly what Egeria did. Commenting on her *Itinerarium*, Georg Röwekamp points out:

Egeria reports also on the liturgies, which were held on her way at the important places Egeria calls these places "holy sites". The commemorations usually consist of a prayer, the reading of a Psalm and biblical passages, and a concluding prayer. She stresses frequently that all these texts for commemoration well correspond to the holy sites, as she is often surprised at the liturgies [she joined] in Jerusalem The group of pilgrims seldom celebrate Eucharist. At these sites where very important [Biblical] incidents are reflected, the pilgrims enthusiastically make offerings (*oblationem facere*), whenever they find a priest at the site.⁵⁰

Röwekamp also notes that Egeria visits all these sites by following Scripture, which served as her travel guidebook.⁵¹ A tourist's guidebook today will take him or her to the sites at which they want to look. It will tell them about the history, about the things they should see there. Yet, there is a significant difference between Egeria and a present-day tourist: Egeria is travelling through the Biblical narrative, and while passing from verse to verse, she becomes prepared to participate in *Vita Christi*, with "her body itself and also the more interiorized sense of her subjectivity". We cannot forget the moving scene at Gethsemane on the Holy Friday in the *Itinerarium*:

When everyone arrives in Gethsemane, they have an appropriate prayer, a hymn, and then a reading from the Gospel about the Lord's arrest. By the time it has been read everyone is groaning and lamenting and weeping so loud that people even across the city can probably hear it all.⁵²

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 54-55.

⁵⁰ Egeria, *Itinerarium Egeriae*, *Egeria, mit Auszügen aus Petrus Diaconus, De Locis sanctis*, 35. 3-36. 5, tr. G. RÖWEKAMP and D. THÖNNES, pp. 266-271.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 36-37.

⁵² *Itinerarium* 36, 3, ed. *Ibid.*, pp. 268-271; English tr. in: *Egeria's Travels*, tr. J. WILKINSON (London, 1971), p. 136.

8. The Discursive, the Tactile, and the Invisible

Frank has made many useful suggestions in her discussion of the role of the various senses in the pilgrims' practices in the Holy Land. Thus in a section titled "Seeing and Touching the Holy Places", she points out how, as the number of the relics and sites increased, the pilgrims' general aim to visit the sites and relics at the Holy Land rapidly focused on the specific desire to touch them as well.⁵³ At the end of her argument, she states that

the physical sense of sight triggered the "eye of faith", which, in turn, perceived a past biblical event as a present reality. ... Sight and touch remained discrete senses, but in late-antique Christian piety, their functions converged to create the conditions for a biblical realism.⁵⁴

Thus, as far as the gaze of early pilgrims is concerned, the sense of sight was not privileged above other sensory receptions of the holy – whether tactile or aural. Although the superiority of vision to the other senses had been posited since the time of Aristotle, it is increasingly difficult to establish that the actual reality of the holy for early Christian and early Byzantine pilgrims was mediated exclusively through their visual experience.

As far as this is concerned, a recent article by Cynthia Hahn offers an opportunity to look at the matter more closely.⁵⁵ She begins her argument with a premise that "among sensory markers of sanctity, it was the sight of the holy that most often inspired faith in the early Middle Ages".⁵⁶ Then, she comes upon a problem since "this primacy of the visual settled a burden of proof squarely upon the early-medieval artist: How could the body of the saint ... be shown to be holy?"⁵⁷ Thus, she embarks on an investigation of what she calls "a rhetoric of sanctity". Such a rhetoric involves "the action of ritual and the transformation of vision, condensing the holy past and the sacred present within the particularities of a given space".⁵⁸

With this primary objective, she enumerates four characteristics of the visual rhetoric of sanctity she proposes:

⁵³ FRANK, "The pilgrim's gaze", pp. 104-109.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 108.

⁵⁵ C. HAHN, "Seeing and believing: The construction of sanctity in early-medieval saints' shrines", *Speculum* 72 (1997), pp. 1079-1106.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 1079.

⁵⁷ *Loc. cit.*

⁵⁸ *Loc. cit.*

- 1 the purposeful creation of the miraculous, which means that “all elements of a shrine, including location and spatial organization, were carefully orchestrated for their effect upon the viewer”;
- 2 glorification of a plural number of saints, since they are a part of the City of God;
- 3 the relation of an individual saint (or his body) to a specific sacred place. The latter encourages intimacy, touch, and proximity so that saintly representations would not be remote or entirely a-temporal; and finally
- 4 rhetoric as an instruction to the viewer about the true visible aspect of the holy.⁵⁹

Thus, her “rhetoric of sanctity” consists of a variety of facets, fulfilling diverse functions in the shrines of saints and their ornamentation in the early medieval period in both Eastern and Western Europe.

What matters here, however, is her argument on the visibility of the saints’ relics as well as the visual setting of the shrines.⁶⁰ Undoubtedly, seeing, or at least being near, the relic of a saint, including his/her real body, was the ultimate goal of pilgrimage, and all visual rhetoric was constructed around this core. Significantly, Hahn points out that

from the earliest shrines to those of the fifth and sixth century, the experience of a saint’s body had shifted from above ground and accessible to a space dominated by mystery and darkness. The body and the tomb were physically separated from the liturgical and communal celebration of the cult ...⁶¹

Thus, according to Hahn, the focus of liturgy gradually shifted from the relic, installed in the dark space of crypt, to the image of the saint, which grew into “a sort of condensation of the more sensory experience of the tomb itself”.⁶²

In concluding her observations on the early shrines in the East, Hahn recognizes that “the free access to the shrine itself was increasingly restricted ...

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 1079-1081.

⁶⁰ Hahn’s interpretation of a passage in Egeria’s *Itinerarium* (HAHN, “Seeing and believing”, p. 1085) needs a minor correction: she associates the ceremony at Golgotha, where the famous gemmed cross is said to have stood, with the lamentation of the participants of the liturgy that was audible from the distant city, which we discussed above. However, *Itinerarium*, 36. 3, reports only the liturgy at Gethsemane, not that at Golgotha. The latter took place in the evening of the next day, as described in *Itinerarium*, tr. RÖWEKAMP and THÖNNES, p. 37. See also: B. BRENNK, “Der Kultort, seine Zugänglichkeit und seine Besucher”, in: *Akten des XII. Internationalen Kongresses für Christliche Archäologie, Bonn., 22.-28. September 1991*, Part 1 (Münster, 1995), pp. 107-109.

⁶¹ HAHN, “Seeing and believing”, p. 1090.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 1091.

Liturgical ceremonies and the mediation of ornament and icon were offered as substitutes for the desired experiences of direct sight and touch”.⁶³ The phenomenon that may be called the “retirement” of relic into the invisible space is undeniable in the case of the shrine of St. Demetrius in Thessaloniki. As Hahn correctly notes, this is an example “where a place became sanctified and the body seemed unnecessary to a continuing cult”.⁶⁴

The situation was not much different in the West; as Hahn argues in her conclusion: “The gradual disappearance of the tomb from the visual field of most viewers represents a conflict between the construction of the shrine and the pilgrim’s desires. Early shrines seem to have encouraged touch and access, but later tombs were hidden away”.⁶⁵

Hahn’s argument as such seems, interestingly enough, to be diametrically opposed to that of Beat Brenk, expressed in 1991.⁶⁶ He divided the chronological development of the early cult places in the East and the West into three different stages: 1) completely sealed cult places, 2) cult places in caves and crypts, and 3) cult places accessible on the ground floor. Most importantly, according to Brenk, at the initial stage of the development of the cult of saints, a relic was completely hidden from the eyes of the worshippers in a place, such as the sealed subterranean chamber in the Old St. Peter’s in Rome. Only later were they gradually brought out to the vision of the devotees, until they came to be completely exposed to view in the Middle Ages.⁶⁷

Despite Hahn’s major premise that relics were more accessible at earlier stages, the evidence Brenk presents militates against such a view. And the materials collected and discussed by Hahn herself too seem to indicate that the “retirement”, or even “concealment”, of a relic began at a very early stage. Even if such concealment did not attain complete invisibility of the relic, a number of the earliest *confessiones*, such as the one under SS. Giovanni e Paolo in Rome, reveal that a holy object was deliberately distanced from the viewer’s eye by means of a deep recess into the wall, obstructing the visitor’s sight with a small but stocky grill or an iron curtain such as that seen in the early representation of the cave of the Nativity.⁶⁸

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 1092.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 1092, n. 99.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 1105.

⁶⁶ BRENK, “Der Kultort”, pp. 69 ff.

⁶⁷ The showing of relics to the public reached its final stage with the decision of the Lateran council in 1215. H. VAN OS, *Der Weg zum Himmel: Reliquienverehrung im Mittelalter* (exhibition catalogue Nieuwe Kerk, Amsterdam, and Museum Catharijneconvent, Utrecht, 2000-2001), pp. 147 ff.

⁶⁸ Similar settings were found ubiquitously, e.g. that in the Grotto of the Nativity in

Further, in the case of ring crypt, which was first set up by Gregory the Great under S. Pietro in Vaticano and later copied in S. Chrysogono in Trastevere and other Roman churches, pilgrims could be lucky enough to get access to the holiest site at the end of the dark circular corridor. However, what they eventually found was just a shadow, or a trace of an object imprinted on the hidden altar beyond the small grilled window.⁶⁹ This remarkable tendency toward the concealment of holy relic persists as late as the twelfth century: a fragment of the most sacred True Cross brought from the Holy Land was completely buried beneath the mosaic wall of S. Clemente, and apparently, since the completion of the church edifice, nobody has seen it.⁷⁰ One might even ask: is it really present under the wall?

9. Conclusion: Matter Beyond Visibility

This examination of recent studies of the visibility of early pilgrims appears to demonstrate that the invisibility, or at least the lack of visibility, which pervades various types of settings for relic veneration, does not have a practical reason, such as the protection of the relic from theft. Rather, it is the result of the concern to separate the holy object from mundane viewing. Accordingly, we may now surmise that the invisibility of the relics thus protected by the rituals and settings that surround it must not only be inherent in the nature of the cult of saints but also, more important, accord with the unique mode of being of the relic itself.

Thus, since ancient times, mystery cults had required not only a secret, secluded *locus* for their rites, but also a certain moment of the day, when the darkness of night or the evening dusk enwraps the climax of the performance.⁷¹ This preference for the darkest moment of the day coincides with a search for

Bethlehem. WEITZMANN, "*Loca Sancta*", pp. 31 ff., esp. pp. 35-37.

⁶⁹ As for a ring crypt, see BRENK, "Der Kultort", pp. 79-81; HAHN, "Seeing and believing", pp. 1098-99; more recently: M. KATO, *The Wall Paintings in the Church of S. Chrysogono in Rome: A Study of the Image of Martyr-Saints in the Early Middle Age* (Tokyo, 2001: *Aspects of Problems in Western Art History 2*) (in Japanese), pp. 17-37.

⁷⁰ A. DIETL, "Die Reliquienrekondierung im Apsismosaik von S. Clemente in Rom", in: *Pratum Romanum*, ed. R.L. COLLELLA et al. (Wiesbaden, 1997), pp. 97-111; A. SUGIMOTO, *Burial of God*, unpublished dissertation, Kanazawa College of Arts, 2000 (in Japanese). Useful is Brenk's observation of 'brandea' in S. Nazaro in Milan (BRENK, "Der Kultort", p. 85), as the issue also concerns the veneration of relics that are beyond visibility.

⁷¹ M.P. NILSSON, *Geschichte der griechischen Religion*, 2, *Die hellenistische und römische Zeit* (Munich, 1988).

a suitable natural setting such as a cave. Whether performed at midnight or in a cave, a mystery cult aims at experiencing the decisive moment of theophany in the midst of darkness. The week-long series of the liturgies of Easter described in detail by Egeria shows that the climax of the rites always occurred in darkness or dusk, whether during a vigil, matins, or vesper.

What is of utmost importance for our present discussion is that, under such circumstances, the participant was deprived of the normal sense of both time and space. While listening to a story in the ritual context, the sequence of narrative time converges with that of clock/historical time, and the participants are, so to speak, abducted into a supernatural reality, in which the cultic image as well as the ritual discourse exert their powers over the participants far more strongly than in normal circumstances. Needless to say, where darkness dominates, the faculty of sight yields its usual superiority to other senses, such as touch and hearing. The Christian cult of relics adopted these features of the ancient mysteries.

I suggest, however, that there may be one more element that characterizes both pagan and Christian cults in the late antique period: a sense of the feminine generativity that governs the birth and death of living beings. Invisibility is her *topos*, no, she is the Place (χώρα) itself, which is none other than the receptacle of all forms, generating every sensory thing in this world. She is none other than "*terra autem invisibilis et incomposita et tenebrae super abyssum*" in whose womb even Christ in the flesh found His rest. It was a special modification of this primordial devotion that the Creator of the world was born from a Virgin's womb. The relevance of "the eternal feminine" to our theme, however, is the subject of another investigation.

Since the Renaissance, art historians have spent much time and energy investigating visibility as the manifestation of the invisible Supreme Being or Idea. If there is no matter, how can we sense and believe in the reality of an Idea? John of Damascus' Christological approach⁷² to the cult of relics was in fact an important step in the development of a typically European ontology that

⁷² According to Louth's exhaustive analysis of John's Christology (LOUTH, *St. John Damascene*, pp. 147 ff.), it seems that John remained essentially a Chalcedonian, assiduously defending the Theotokos. Further, Louth concludes his section on John's doctrine of the icon with his very important observations that, possibly under the influence of Ps.-Dionysius, "the role of images and the truth of the Incarnation are not unrelated", and that " '(Christ) placed himself in the order of signs' ". "It is signs and images that relate ... beings placed on the border between different kinds of reality – visible and invisible, material and spiritual". (LOUTH, *St. John Damascene*, pp. 217-218).

has guided art historians in posing and answering the questions that have so long preoccupied them.⁷³

⁷³ Due to the limited time and space for publication, the present author could not discuss a number of points that emerged from the results of this short study. Above all, he would have liked to elucidate a sort of sequence, or ontological order, of 'Discourse-Image-Matter'. Thus, the function of a reliquary together with the relic contained in it might be more exhaustively explained: this is important, because the traditional art historical approach has seldom studied these three elements as an integral whole. The recent theory of art history proposed by Georges Didi-Huberman will provide a set of useful concepts, such as *figura* and *vestigium* (*empreinte*) (cf. G. DIDI-HUBERMAN, *Fra Angelico, Dissemblance et figuration* (Paris, 1995), esp. pp. 74-98).



Fig. 1 Wooden reliquary box from the Sancta Sanctorum, Musei Vaticani (photo: author)

Part II: Early Middle Ages

The Vocabulary of Vision and Worship in the Early Carolingian Period

THOMAS F.X. NOBLE

If I say "Do you see?" I might be asking you about something that you are looking at, but it is more likely that I am really asking you "Do you understand?" Suppose I said "Picture this". Again, I would probably be asking you to imagine something that you cannot see. I would be asking you to visualize something, to grasp something, to understand something. Seeing, picturing, visualizing, and understanding are intimately related, that is obvious. What is less obvious is the nature of the relationship between what is seen and what is understood. No less complicated is the relationship of what is pictured and what is understood. Closely related to those relationships is the no less self-evident matter of communicating an understanding of what has been seen.

Christianity, like Judaism, uses words to communicate an understanding of God, who cannot be seen, who is invisible: "No one has ever seen God" (Io 1, 18). Matthew tells us that after he had baptized Jesus in the Jordan John the Baptist "saw the spirit of God descend like a dove" (Mt 3, 16; cf. Io 1, 32). Biblical scholars have wrangled for ages over just what John saw. I suspect that their energies might have been applied more profitably to exploring what John understood. Paul says that Christ is the image of the invisible God (Col 1, 15) and Jesus himself said that "whoever has seen me has seen the Father" (Io 14, 8). The first letter of John begins this way: "This we proclaim to you: what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked upon and what our hands have touched – we speak of the word of life. For this life became visible; we have seen it and bear witness to it and we proclaim to you the eternal life that was present to the father and

became visible to us" (1 Io 1-3). The incarnation changed everything and made everything more difficult to understand. This act of divine condescension demanded prodigies of spiritual cognition; it required people to "see" things in a new way. It forced a revaluation of the connection between seeing and knowing. Both ancient faiths avoided the temptations of pantheism, the tendency to see the divine in the created order. Yet both faiths also believed that the created order could communicate, however imperfectly, true and meaningful aspects of the Deity's will and purposes. What one saw, that is, communicated knowledge, understanding, of what could not be seen.

Christianity's visual arts were themselves one important consequence of the startling confusion of the visible and invisible generated by the Incarnation. That art, in turn, generated a discourse that bubbled to the surface in the third century, boiled over several times in the following 1700 years, and simmers away, still, at the present time. When Christian writers began to talk about art, there was already in existence a growing array of actual works of art. These began simply enough with symbols: a cross, a fish, a dove, a boat, a table laden with bread. Gradually the *historiai* made their appearance, biblical scenes that began very simply and developed into elaborate sequences. Gradually aesthetic, cultural, and social forces generated a variety of spectacularly decorated Christian spaces. The words of Christian commentators were sometimes abstract and theoretical and sometimes addressed to specific works of art. Writers puzzled over what people saw, what they were supposed to see, what they might have imagined as a result of what they looked at, and what mental images they formed of scenes they encountered in their reading. To a degree that we can never fully comprehend or measure, they wondered what people understood, what they knew, after they looked at an image.

My focus in this essay will fall on the early Carolingian period. During Charlemagne's reign (768-814) the Byzantines held a large church council at Nicaea whose purpose was to reverse a half-century of intense iconophobia and occasional iconoclasm. In this time, two of Charlemagne's courtiers expressed themselves at some length on the matter of images, both mental and material. The Anglo-Saxon Alcuin (*ca.* 735-804), Charlemagne's most influential courtier, addressed himself to things seen and unseen in letters and biblical commentaries. Another scholar attracted to Charlemagne's court, the Visigoth Theodulf (*ca.* 750-821), prepared, in Charlemagne's name, a massive response to Byzantium's conciliar decrees. As we shall see, a few of their contemporaries spoke in a general way about images and their uses. My aim is to promote understanding of how the Carolingians talked about the visible and the invisible

at a decisive moment in the intellectual history of the West, a moment when controversies over the art, the visible, and the invisible were at the boil.

I shall draw the reader's attention to a few representative Carolingian texts in an attempt to make clear what they were saying. The discourse surrounding Christian art generates the "vocabulary" in my title. I shall speak not as a philosopher or philologist, but instead as a student of Christian diction. Then, to place those texts into perspective, I shall take the reader back to the world of Late Antiquity when writers began to discuss the visible and the invisible in general terms and also to reflect on what arts Christians might legitimately have and use. The incarnation made possible – some Orthodox theologians would say made necessary – a distinctively Christian visual art. That art was meant to be seen, of course, but not merely to be seen in a passive, static sense. Christian art was intended to delight, to move, to inspire, and to teach. Above all it was meant to communicate knowledge, truth, that was independent of its forms and production. It was not, and would not be for many centuries, the autonomous and self-conscious production of a person whom we might call an 'artist'.¹ Nevertheless, my attention here is directed to those who talked about Christian art and vision, not to those who made it.

In our toings and froings between the late antique and the Carolingian worlds, we shall become aware, some stark differences between the ways in which Carolingian and Byzantine writers talked about images, and thus about relationships between the visible and the invisible. In addition to claiming that visual images could teach, inspire, etc., some claimed that they had the power to heal afflictions, to bring good fortune, or to ward off enemies. Others suggested that images somehow participated in the holiness of the persons whom they depicted. A few writers held that images were privileged windows that granted viewers access to the transcendent realm. These ideas, to be sure to varying degrees, entered the Byzantine discourse on art and the relationship between the visible and the invisible. Such ideas generally remained alien to the Carolingians. They refused to believe that images were more than "vile matter", more than "manufactured things". Words communicated truth, not pictures. Relics participated in holiness, but pictures did not. In short, there is a prominent metaphysical dimension present in Byzantine but absent from Carolingian reflections. Late Antiquity was unquestionably the *fons et origo* for subsequent discussions of art, but the font was vast and those who drew from it found different authors and different schools of thought compelling.

¹ This is one of the central arguments of the brilliant and controversial H. BELTING, *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image Before the Era of Art*, tr. E. JEPHCOTT (Chicago, 1994).

One final preliminary consideration before launching into my exploration of the vocabulary, or language, of vision concerns certain persistent misunderstandings about art and its attendant language. The first and most important one may be labelled the “myth of aniconism”, a phrase I borrow from David Freedberg.² This myth urges us to believe that Judaism was not only aniconic but indeed hostile to figural representations. Early Christianity, therefore, given its deep Jewish roots, ought to have been similarly aniconic and hostile. Somehow, Christianity’s encounter with the cultures of the Roman world tempted Christians, or some of them, to fall from their sturdy primitive purity.³ Old Testament scholars, on the other hand, take it as given that ancient Judaism had an ambivalent attitude towards figural representations. God forbade ‘graven images’ but commanded other images to be made – one thinks immediately of the Ark of the Covenant or the Temple. In the immediate environs of early Christianity, moreover, the synagogues Ain ed-Duk, Beth Alpha, and Dura Europos contained figural mosaics and frescoes as did the Villa Torlonia in Rome. Some Jewish books had pictures as well. Christianity’s Jewish environment was neither aniconic nor hostile to visual representations.⁴ That is what is wrong in the prevailing view. Aidan Nichols avoids such specious and fallacious reasoning when he says that Christian art was “a thoroughly intelligible impulse of distinctively Christian faith, hope, and love among the people of God. The instinct which created it is not perhaps the poorest example of that *sensus fidelium* in which John Henry Newman liked to see the ‘infallibility of the laity’ ”.⁵

A second problem resides in the persistent tendency to imagine a continuously vigorous discussion of Christian art from the era of Constantine until the present. In fact discussions of art were episodic, largely unconnected to each other in any direct sense, and rarely associated with any specific work of art.

² D. FREEDBERG, *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response* (Chicago, 1989), pp. 54–81.

³ Excellent general discussion in P.C. FINNEY, *The Invisible God: The Earliest Christians on Art* (New York, 1994).

⁴ For three recent discussions with rich bibliography see: F.-L. HOSSFELD, “Das Werden des alttestamentlichen Bilderverbotes im Kontext vom Archäologie, Rechtsentwicklung und Prophetie. Thesen”, C. FREVEL, “Du sollst dir kein Bildnis machen! – Und wenn doch? Überlegungen zur Kultbildlosigkeit der Religion Israels”, and F. HARTENSTEIN, “Die unvergleichliche ‘Gestalt’ JHWHs. Israels Geschichte mit den Bildern im Licht von Dtn. 4, 1–14”, all in: *Die Sichtbarkeit des Unsichtbaren: Zur Korrelation von Text und Bild im Wirkungskreis der Bibel*, ed. B. JANOWSKI and N. ZCHOMELIDSE (Stuttgart, 2003: *Arbeiten zur Geschichte und Wirkung der Bibel* 3), pp. 11–22, 23–48, 49–77.

⁵ A. NICHOLS, *The Art of God Incarnate: Theology and Image in Christian Tradition* (New York, 1980), p. 51.

Certain conventional ways of speaking for or against art did emerge. Many authors were aware, from integral texts or from florilegia, of what their predecessors had said. But until the advent of Byzantine iconoclasm in the eighth century, there was no single, continuous debate as there was, for example, about the person and nature of Christ. Discussions of art were generally ad hoc and provoked by entirely different problems. Getting this issue right pertains to the Carolingians in two ways. Their forays into art-talk were provoked by very specific circumstances and not by a long, on-going argument. What is more, Carolingian texts reveal an exceptionally able command of what had already been said, and of the implications of a wide array of positions. As we have seen, their responses were different from those of their Byzantine contemporaries but they were not, as is too often asserted, ill-informed or uncomprehending.

Let's begin our reflections on the Carolingian language and vocabulary of art, of vision, with Alcuin. In an intriguing letter to his pupil Fridugis († 834) he said the following:

There are three ways of seeing things: One is corporal, another symbolic, and the third is mental. Corporal vision means to see with the eyes of the body. Symbolic vision means that, the body's eyes having nothing to do with it, we perceive in spirit alone through some act of imagination, as when we happen to spot something unfamiliar to our sight and immediately an image of that object is formed in the spirit but the symbolic imagination does not emerge before the corporal perception has been encountered. Mental sight means that we consider with the liveliness of the mind alone, as when we read in the Scriptures "Love your neighbour as yourself". The letters are read by means of bodily sight and the neighbour is called back to the spiritual imagination, and love is seen by the mind's understanding alone.

The first kind of vision is the best known of all. The second is equally familiar to all. The third is unknown to most because they do not know how to differentiate what is symbolic and what is mental. The apostle distinguishes these two with one statement, at that a superbly brief one, when he says "I will pray with my spirit and I will pray with my mind; I will sing with my spirit and I will sing with my mind". He named "Spirit" the hidden meanings that are in the Holy Scriptures and he called "mind" their plain meanings. For he wanted to pray with an understanding of those things which we were talking about. Whence in another place he says "If I have prayed with my tongue, my spirit has prayed but my mind is without fruit". The tongue means here the dark and mystical meanings which are customarily perceived by the spirit and if we have no understanding of them our minds remain fruitless.⁶

⁶ Alcuin, *Epistolae* 135, ed. E. DÜMMLER, in: *Epistolae Karolini aevi* (II), ed. E. DÜMMLER et al. (Berlin, 1895: MGH EPP 4), p. 204.

It is irritating that we do not have Fridugis's letter to Alcuin. We do not know exactly what he asked his master to explain. Alcuin, however, returned to this same topic in his *Commentary on the Apocalypse* where he said:

Our fathers taught us that there are three kinds of sight that must be understood: the corporal, so that we see the sun, the moon, and all the rest with our eyes; the symbolic which happens when a waking or sleeping person takes leave of his mind and sees through the intent perception of his spirit not corporal things but the likenesses of corporal things, as when Pharaoh saw cows ...; The third is called mental and through it not corporal things, nor their likenesses, but the very truth of things is made plain to those who are deep in contemplation.⁷

In his *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, in dealing with the line "Turn your eyes from me for they torment me" Alcuin used these words:

That is, your mind's eye. Do not seek to know me perfectly during your earthly pilgrimage, because that is not possible; for the more you seek to know me more intently, the more certainly you will understand that I am incomprehensible. Do not seek for the reward along the path that is reserved for you in your homeland.⁸

As a final example, consider these words from Alcuin's *Commentary on John*:

For it must be considered very diligently when he said "You will see the spirit descending upon him" and he adds "and remaining above him". For his spirit also descended upon the saints. Truly, as long as they are in the body they do not always focus their mind's eye enough on the contemplation of heavenly things; more often they direct it to the care of worldly things.⁹

Where, we might ask, did Alcuin obtain this way of talking? Who gave him his vocabulary, his language? The simple answer is: Augustine (354-430). In his *Literal Commentary on Genesis in Twelve Books*, we read:

What is seen actually, not as in an image, and not through the eyes of the body, is seen by that vision which surpasses all others. In so far as the Lord will help me, I will try to explain the types of vision and how they differ. Behold, when this one precept is read – "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" – three kinds of vision arise: one through the eyes by which we see the letters themselves; another through

⁷ Alcuin, *Commentariorum in apocalypsin Libri Quinque*, ed. in: *PL* 100, col. 1089A-B.

⁸ Alcuin, *Compendium in Canticum Canticorum*, ad vers. 5, ed. in: *PL* 100, col. 657D.

⁹ Alcuin, *Commentaria in S. Iohannis Evangelium*, 1. 2 (ad vers. 35), ed. in: *PL* 100, col. 757C-D.

the spirit by which the neighbor is contemplated even though he is absent; and a third through a perception of the mind whereby this very love is seen to be understood. Among these kinds of vision, the first is clear to everyone for in this way heaven and earth are seen and everything in them is perceived by our eyes. Nor is that other one, by which absent bodies are contemplated corporally, difficult to explain. Indeed, we can think about heaven and earth and all that we can see in them even when we are standing in the dark and seeing nothing with our bodily eyes and yet contemplating bodily images in our soul. These might be true images, in so far as we have seen those bodies and kept them in memory, or imaginary images, in so far as our thinking has fashioned them. So it is one thing to think of Carthage, which we know, and another thing to think of Alexandria, which we do not know. The third kind of vision, by which love is seen to be understood, concerns those things which have no images or likenesses which are not what they themselves actually are. For a man, or a tree, or the sun and whatever other bodies there are in heaven or on earth are seen when present in their own forms and are contemplated when absent in images impressed on the mind. They generate two kinds of vision: one through the perception of the body and another through the spirit in which those images are contained. Is love, however, seen in one way when it is present in the manner in which it exists and when it is absent in another way in some sort of an image like itself? No. But in so far as it is possible to perceive with the mind, this love is seen more clearly by one and less clearly by another. But if some bodily image is contemplated, then it is not love that is seen.¹⁰

In his book *On the Trinity* Augustine said:

... when we believe in some corporal things (physical? *corporalia*) about which we have read or heard but which we have not seen, the mind fashions something (*aliquid*, but here surely "image") for itself in the lines and shapes of bodies, just as it occurs to our thoughts Who having read or heard read or heard what the apostle Paul wrote, or what was written about him, will not fashion in his mind a face for the apostle, and for everyone else who is mentioned in these texts. And since each member among the vast multitude of those to whom these texts are known will think of the lines and shape of their bodies differently, it is completely uncertain who thinks most closely and accurately. Our faith is not concerned with what physical face those men had, but with how they lived through the grace of God, and what they did, which things are witnessed in those writings Even the physical face of the Lord himself is pictured with in varying ways by countless imaginations, though whatever it was like he certainly had only one.¹¹

¹⁰ Augustine, *De genesi ad litteram libri duodecim*, 12. 6, ed. J. ZYCHA (Vienna, 1894: CSEL 28.1), pp. 386-387.

¹¹ Augustine, *De Trinitate libri XV*, 8. 4. 7, ed. W. J. MOUNTAIN (Turnhout, 1968: CCSL 50), pp. 275-276.

In the same work Augustine adds:

For when the image of someone, either of a place or of a man, or of anybody you please, should appear the same to our eyes as it had appeared to our mind when we were contemplating it before we saw it we are moved by this not inconsiderable miracle which happens so rarely, indeed almost never.¹²

Alcuin knew this text of which thirteen eighth- and ninth-century manuscripts survive, a fairly broad dissemination which suggests to me that many of Alcuin's contemporaries knew it too.¹³ In a short work, perhaps a sermon, from about 399, *On Faith in Things Unseen*, Augustine said:

There are some who think the Christian religion ought to be ridiculed rather than upheld. The reason for this is that in it, not the thing which may be seen is set forth, but faith in things which are not seen is imposed upon men. For the sake of refuting those who, prudent in their own opinion, seem to be opposed to believing what they cannot see, we surely have not the power to present to the eyes of men the divine truths which we believe. Yet we do show the minds of men that even those things which are not seen ought to be believed. Now, as regards those whom folly has made so servile to the eyes of the body that they do not think they ought to believe anything which they do not perceive through those eyes, they ought, in the first place, to be reminded of how many things there are which cannot be seen with such eyes – things which they not only believe but also know.

These things are innumerable in our mind itself, whose nature is invisible – to say nothing of other things, like the very faith by which we believe, or the thought process by which we know either that we believe something or that we do not believe it, although it might be entirely outside the realm of those eyes. What is there so bare, so clear, what so certain to the interior perceptions (*interioribus visibus*) of our minds? How, therefore, must we not believe what we do not see with our bodily eyes, when we perceive beyond any doubt either that we believe or do not believe where we cannot employ the eyes of the body?¹⁴

This text survives in one eighth- and one ninth-century manuscript.¹⁵ I cannot show that Alcuin knew it. But the thoughts which it contains are consonant with

¹² *Ibid.*, 8. 5. 7, p. 277.

¹³ See the comments on manuscripts by MOUNTAIN, *CCSL* 50, pp. XLVI–XLVII. See also D.A. BULLOUGH, *Alcuin: Achievement and Reputation* (Leiden, 2004), p. 246 (noting, too, that in his *De ratione Animae* of 801 or a bit later Alcuin again both drew from *De Trinitate* and talked about mental images).

¹⁴ Augustine, *De fide rerum invisibilium* XX, ed. M.J. VAN DEN HOUT (Turnhout, 1969: *CCSL* 46), pp. 1–2.

¹⁵ See the comments on manuscripts by VAN DEN HOUT, *CCSL* 46, pp. LIV–LIX.

Alcuin's thinking. Similar passages in the Cassiciacum dialogue *On the Teacher*,¹⁶ which was not widely known in the Carolingian period, and in *On Christian Doctrine*,¹⁷ which had the general familiarity of a school text, support and extend Augustine's reflections on what we can and cannot see, and on how what we do see directs our mind to realities beyond those visible to the body's eyes.¹⁸

Alcuin and Augustine both drew attention to the powers and limitations of physical sight. Each evinces a certain indifference to what we can actually see arrayed before us because what we can see physically, carnally, bodily is so much less important than what we see mentally or spiritually. Augustine generally considered images to be superfluous and he worried about their capacity to induce confusion, as when a painter depicted Jesus together with Peter and Paul.¹⁹ But Augustine really had little to say about material images. Nor did Alcuin. Mental images, for Augustine as for Alcuin, are a different matter. Spiritual vision, interior perception, the mind's eye, alone sees truly.

Augustine affected a certain indifference to both material and mental pictures, and he was not alone. Before Alcuin's time, however, I have been able to find only a few other writers who shared Augustine's interests in or concerns about mental images. At the heart of the anthropomorphist controversy was the matter of the mental image. The Egyptian abba Sopatrus (early fourth century) put it this way:

Do not get involved in discussions about the image. Although this is not heresy, there is too much ignorance and liking for dispute between the two parties in this matter. It is impossible for a creature to understand the truth of it.²⁰

Sopatrus was not speaking of material images but instead of mental ones. Central to the controversy was the claim on the part of the heroically spiritual that while material images were beneath contempt mental images were signs of

¹⁶ Augustine, *De magistro*, 12. 39, ed. G. WEIGEL (Vienna, 1961: CSEL 77), p. 53.

¹⁷ Augustine, *De doctrina Christiana*, 2. 1-3, 10, 14, ed. J. MARTIN (Turnhout, 1962: CCL 32), pp. 32-34, 41-42, 46-47.

¹⁸ On the manuscripts of *De magistro*, see WEIGEL's comments in CSEL 77, pp. IX-XX and on those of *De doctrina Christiana* see MARTIN, CCL 32, pp. XIX-XXXVII. BULLOUGH, *Alcuin*, p. 263 finds no evidence that Alcuin knew *De magistro* but detects three quotations from *De doctrina Christiana* in a letter (No. 19) that Alcuin wrote in 793.

¹⁹ Augustine, *De consensu evangelistarum*, 1. 10, ed. F. WEHRICH (Vienna 1904: CSEL 43), p. 15.

²⁰ Sopatrus, *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers: The Alphabetical Collection*, tr. B. WARD (Kalamazoo, 1975), p. 225.

deficient spirituality. John Cassian (ca. 360-435), whose *Conferences* were widely disseminated in the early medieval West, sounded the same theme.²¹ There is an echo of either the anthropomorphist controversy or the issues that undergirded it in Caesarius of Arles (ca. 470-542) who urged his community of nuns “Do not put up painted tablets, nor should there be any pictures on the walls or in the rooms, for in a monastery there should be only things that please the spiritual, not the human eyes”.²² Isidore of Seville (560-636), who was particularly concerned about idolatry, spoke only briefly about material images and barely touched on mental ones except when he said that “a painting (*pictura*) is an image (*imago*) expressing the appearance of something else which, while it is being viewed, brings it back to memory. A painting, however, is called artificial, for it is a fashioned image, not the truth”.²³ The visual implications of the concerns of Augustine, Cassian, and Caesarius appear as well in a passage in Gregory of Tours (ca. 540-594). The wife of Bishop Namatius of Clermont sat with a book open on her lap – it would be interesting to know what book, but Gregory does not tell us – and while reading stories she dictated to workmen what they should paint on the walls, specifically “stories of ancient deeds”.²⁴ In a passage in his book *On the Glory of the Martyrs* Gregory speaks of people who have the law of Christ in their hearts but who also have pictures of his “meritorious deeds” in their homes and churches, the better to remember his deeds.²⁵ A poem of Venantius Fortunatus (ca. 530-ca. 610) describes a cycle of narrative paintings that Gregory installed in his rebuilt cathedral.²⁶

These writers were concerned about both material and mental images. Important help in understanding their sentiments comes from Patricia Cox Miller’s book on *Dreams in Late Antiquity*. Late Antiquity was a time, she argues, when almost everything was understood in terms of images. Images might be allegorical, oneiric, or visionary. People shared a world view based on analogies, an “insistently figural way of viewing social, psychic, religious, and philosophical dimensions of life”.²⁷ Giselle de Nie adds that “imagistic asso

²¹ John Cassian, *Conférences VIII-XVII*, ed. E. PICHERY (Paris, 1958: SC 54), pp. 78-79.

²² Caesarius, *Regula*, c. 42, ed. in: PL 67, col. 1116B.

²³ *Etymologiae*, l. 73. 32, ed. W.M. LINDSAY, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1911), 1, p. 74.

²⁴ Gregory of Tours, *Decem Libri Historiarum* 2. 17, ed. B. KRUSCH and W. LEVISON, *Gregorii Turonensis Opera*, 1, *Libri historiarum X* (Hannover, 1937-1951: MGH SRM 1.1), pp. 164-165.

²⁵ Gregory of Tours, *De gloria martyrum* 21, ed. B. KRUSCH, *Gregorii Turonensis Opera*, 2, *Miracula et opera minora* (Berlin, 1885: MGH SRM 1.2), p. 51.

²⁶ Venantius Fortunatus, *Carmina*, 10, ed. F. LEO, *Venanti Honori Clementiani Fortunati presbyteri Italici Opera poetica* (Berlin, 1881: MGH AA 4.1), pp. 234-238.

²⁷ P. COX MILLER, *Dreams in Late Antiquity: Studies in the Imagination of a Culture*

ciations are not limited by discursive principles such as contradiction and incongruity" such that "an image could present multileveled, dynamic truths in a way that abstract statements could not".²⁸ Looking from a slightly different angle, Herbert Kessler believes that such images may have played a key role in the Christianization of the only partially converted population of Gaul.²⁹ Presumably pictures could reinforce teachings when one was in their presence and could continue to do so when one recalled them and made mental images of the material images previously viewed.

Here is how I understand the famous comments of Pope Gregory I (540-604, pope 590-604).³⁰ His references to art are meagre, and his exceptional statement in a letter to Serenus of Marseilles that pictures might accomplish for the illiterate what books do for the literate was called forth by a specific burst of iconoclasm initiated by the bishop of Marseilles. There is no reason to suppose that, absent this provocation, he would ever have addressed himself to the uses of art – and it is important to bear in mind that he did not discuss art *per se*. The simplicity of his statement is deceptive, for as a number of scholars have pointed out Gregory assumes that the illiterate will have been properly instructed in advance of their actually having viewed an image. Gregory, always more traditionalist than innovator,³¹ is here speaking as Augustine did in his book *On the Teacher* when he said that if we are asked about something that

(Princeton, 1994), p. 104.

²⁸ G. DE NIE, "The poet as visionary: Venantius Fortunatus's 'new mantle' for Saint Martin", *Cassiodorus: Rivista di studi sulla tarda antichità* 3 (1997), pp. 49-83; see also EAD., "Images as 'mysteries': The shape of the invisible", *The Journal of Medieval Latin* 9 (1999), pp. 78-90.

²⁹ H. KESSLER, "Pictorial narrative and Church mission in sixth-century Gaul", in: *Pictorial Narrative in Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, ed. H. KESSLER and M. SCHREVE (Washington, 1985: *Studies in the History of Art* 16), pp. 75-91.

³⁰ Gregory I, *Registrum Epistolarum*, 9. 208, ed. P. EWALD and L.M. HARTMANN, *Gregorii I papae Registrum epistolarum: Libri I-VII* (Berlin, 1887-1891: *MGHEPP* 1), p. 195. See also: L.G. DUGGAN, "Was art really the 'book of the illiterate'?", *Word and Image* 5 (1989), pp. 227-251, with the older literature. The best study of these letters, with even more of the literature, is C.M. CHAZELLE, "Pictures, books, and the illiterate: Pope Gregory I's letters to Serenus of Marseilles", *Word and Image* 6 (1990), pp. 138-153. On the important matter of the rhetorical style of these letters see M. BANNIARD, "*Zelum discretionis condire*: Langages et styles de Grégoire le Grand dans sa correspondance", in: *Papauté, monachisme et théories politiques*, 1, *Le pouvoir et l'institution ecclésiastique: Etudes d'histoire médiévale offertes à Marcel Pacaut*, ed. P. GUICHARD *et al.* (Lyon, 1994: *Collection d'histoire et d'archéologie médiévales* 1), pp. 29-46, esp. pp. 37-38.

³¹ R. MARKUS, *The End of Ancient Christianity* (Cambridge, 1990), p. XI: "Gregory was neither a faithful disciple of Augustine, Ambrose and Cassian: the fathers he liked, above all, to consider his forebears; nor an original, creative thinker such as they had been".

is not present but that we saw on an earlier occasion, then the words of the question do not refer to the thing itself but to the image of it which we hold in our mind; the images impressed by them (scil. the words) on the senses and stored away in the memory. Memory, Augustine says, retains images as witnesses of things already perceived by the senses.³² If I am not mistaken, Pope Gregory, like Augustine, was more deeply concerned about what the mind's eye perceived than he was about the objects of carnal vision.

Having explored Alcuin's words and some of their direct and indirect sources, let us turn to Theodulf of Orléans who expressed himself at great length on the matter of images.³³ Written in the most exuberantly optimistic days of Charlemagne's reign, his *Opus Caroli regis* is cast as a polemic against Byzantium. Theodulf composed his work in an historical key. He wrote the Byzantines out of history, as in a way the Bible had done with the Assyrians and Babylonians, by making all time and salvation history point to the Franks. He also condemned the Byzantine church and imperial regime, Byzantine theology and scriptural exegesis, and Byzantine excesses in art. In other words, taking seriously any single argument of Theodulf's demands a constant awareness of the huge range of issues – ethnic, doctrinal, exegetical, and linguistic, among others – with which he concerned himself.³⁴

Theodulf expresses his basic position on images with these words:

We do not speak against images for the memory of past deeds and the beauty of churches, since we know that they were thus made by Moses and Solomon, although as type figures, but we reject their most insolent and more than that most superstitious adoration which we cannot discover to have been instituted by the patriarchs, prophets, apostles, or apostolic men.³⁵

Theodulf, like Augustine before him, was a minimalist. Theodulf admired beautiful objects but he adopted what might be called a calculated indifference

³² Augustine, *De magistro* 12. 39, ed. WEIGEL, p. 53.

³³ Theodulf of Orléans, *Opus Caroli Regis contra Synodum (Libri Carolini)*, ed. A. FREEMAN (Hannover, 1998: MGH CONC 2, *Supplementum* 1).

³⁴ Theodulf's greatest student is Ann Freeman. The "Einleitung" to her edition of the *Opus Caroli*, pp. 1-85, effectively summarizes forty years of her work. Two of my studies present my views on the historical issues in the text: "Tradition and learning in search of ideology", in: *The Gentle Voices of Teachers: Aspects of Learning in the Carolingian Age*, ed. R. SULLIVAN (Columbus, 1995), pp. 227-260, and "From the *Libri Carolini* to the *Opus Caroli Regis*", *Journal of Medieval Latin* 9 (1999), pp. 131-147.

³⁵ Theodulf, *Opus Caroli*, 1. 9, ed. FREEMAN, p. 254.

to art in that he was unwilling to assign to any object any sort of significance in the salvation of Christians.

Theodulf addressed himself to most of the major arguments that emerged in Late Antiquity or in the early Middle Ages. To be sure, he had at his disposal the *Acta* of II Nicaea as a kind of anthology of texts and as a basic agenda for discussion. But he did not hesitate to reorganize the Nicene materials in ways that suited his own purposes and (by what means it is almost impossible to say) he expanded on the materials he found in the *Acta*. His posture with respect to the arguments of the *Acta* was in almost every instance contrarian. For example, on twenty-three occasions he responded to the old defense of images on the grounds that Jesus had appeared on earth as a man and could be depicted like other men.³⁶ Usually Theodulf speaks of the incarnation in typological or exegetical terms but on one occasion he said that if anyone shows you a picture and says it is the son of God, he lies. For no picture assumed humanity on our behalf, was flogged, crucified, died, and rose from the dead. God, he says, is to be sought in the heart, not in visible things, whether these be pictures or the evidence of God's creation.³⁷ Theodulf in effect sidesteps the argument from incarnation by saying that pictures cannot by themselves reveal anything of fundamental significance. Once again we can perceive his calculated indifference.

Theodulf says that the old argument that an act of worship performed before an image refers that worship to the person represented is "flatly absurd".³⁸ He says, first, that pictures are indeterminate. Suppose, he says, you have a picture of a beautiful woman. Some think it is Mary and some, Venus. Now someone places a *titulus* on the picture and labels it "Mary". Is it now holy, he wonders, and capable of referring prayers to the Mother of God? If it is labelled "Venus" should it be discarded?³⁹ Moreover, saints disdained all marks of honour to themselves while on earth and cannot be pleased by honours shown to their alleged pictures.⁴⁰ Pictures could bring things already known back to memory. Pictures could not be identified in any philosophical or material sense with the persons or scenes they depicted.

Some think that images might instruct the unlettered. Theodulf thinks it more likely that pictures, again because they spring from the whims of artists, are more likely to lead the simple astray than to instruct them. Theodulf cites

³⁶ Theodulf, *Opus Caroli*, ed. FREEMAN, "Wort- und Sachregister", p. 638.

³⁷ Theodulf, *Opus Caroli*, 4. 1, ed. FREEMAN, pp. 489-491.

³⁸ Theodulf, *Opus Caroli*, 3. 16, ed. FREEMAN, pp. 407 ff.

³⁹ Theodulf, *Opus Caroli*, 4. 16, ed. FREEMAN, pp. 528-529.

⁴⁰ Theodulf, *Opus Caroli*, 3. 16, ed. FREEMAN, p. 408.

Gregory's famous letters to Serenus but only to argue that images may be neither worshipped nor destroyed. He completely neglects Gregory's *obiter dictum* that art might do for the unlettered what books do for the literate.⁴¹ This neglect is paradoxical because, as we saw just above, Theodulf, like Gregory, believed that pictures might commemorate "past deeds". Perhaps Theodulf was, like Augustine, so logocentric that he did not wish to assign a prominent teaching function to visual representations. Moreover, because Gregory was not mentioned at Nicaea, Theodulf's citation of the letter to Serenus serves as one demonstration of the ways in which Theodulf felt free to edit his material as seemed best to him.

Theodulf utterly dismisses miraculous images. He does this on two grounds. First, he calls into doubt the authenticity of any text that reports on either the miraculous origin of a specific image or a miracle connected with an image. Miracles, in any case, reveal the power of God.⁴² Secondly, Theodulf rejects potent images on the grounds of the materials of which they are made. Among material objects only relics and consecrated vessels have any genuine spiritual power.⁴³

All of this is conventional. It is significant to insist that Theodulf was aware of the major arguments that had been raised on all sides of the visual discourse that was by his day some five hundred years old. But to stop here would be to leave the impression that Theodulf was purely derivative, that he had nothing new to say. This impression would be inaccurate on several grounds. First, no one before Theodulf, absolutely no one, dealt so comprehensively and in such detail with the language of art and worship. Secondly, as I have argued elsewhere, Theodulf did articulate novel positions in ecclesiology and political thought on the basis of his ruminations on art.⁴⁴ But the fundamental issue is this: Theodulf said some startlingly new things about beauty, about art, and about the relationship between the visible and the invisible, although he teased his arguments out of older material.

His innovative achievement was clear, even when he appropriated old arguments, one of which may serve as our starting point. Theodulf was aware of the claim that art could inspire, could liberate the mind from its attachment to this world. When he addressed this argument he turned to Paul, specifically to

⁴¹ Theodulf, *Opus Caroli*, 2. 23, 3. 16, ed. FREEMAN, pp. 278-280, 410-411. On the issue of Gregory's letters see C. CHAZELLE, "Images, scripture, the Church, and the *Libri Carolini*", *Proceedings of the PMR Conference* 16-17 (1992-1993), pp. 53-76.

⁴² Theodulf, *Opus Caroli*, 3. 21; 3. 30; 4. 12, ed. FREEMAN, pp. 428-435, 480, 514-515.

⁴³ Theodulf, *Opus Caroli*, 4. 16, ed. FREEMAN, pp. 527-528.

⁴⁴ See my studies cited in n. 33.

Rm 8, to say that our hopes must be placed in things unseen.⁴⁵ For Theodulf spiritual progress comes only when one can see in the depths of the soul things that are invisible to the naked eye. Some thirty times Theodulf speaks of the mind's eye (*oculus mentis* or *internus oculus*, which I take to be synonymous) and what it can see.⁴⁶ His position is Augustinian – and Alcuinian too! – but he develops his view in greater detail than either the church father or his contemporary (with whom he did not have cordial relations) ever did. His originality lies in his more comprehensive exposition of a problem to which Augustine himself was largely indifferent and which left not even the faintest trace at Nicaea.

What did the mind's eye see? And how did it see? He reveals his thinking when he says "Painters can therefore in some way bring the stories of past events back to the memory but things that are only perceived by the senses and brought forth by words are comprehended by writers, not by painters".⁴⁷ Theodulf does not use the Gregorian vocabulary of sight, marked as it was by words such as *videre* and *cernere*. He uses instead a vocabulary that takes its own rise in Bede, whom Theodulf cited. Bede, and Theodulf, use words like *intuere* and *contuitus*; contemplation is at issue here, not sight, or at any rate not sight alone.⁴⁸ Words are superior to pictures in every case because they are precise and determinate. But they are not necessarily more transparent than pictures. Words too can deceive but their deceptions can be avoided when one gazes with the mind's eyes ("*internis oculis*").

For instance, he says that people who see a picture of a beautiful woman with a baby cannot help but adore the picture because they suppose it to be Mary and Jesus. Yet the truth of this picture is to be found in the words of scripture and in the secrets of the heart, not in paints upon wood. Besides, he wonders, how do we know whose picture it is? Maybe it is a picture of Sarah holding Isaac, or of Rebecca holding Jacob, or of Bathsheba and Solomon, or of Elizabeth and John. Maybe the figures are strangers or maybe they represent Venus holding Aeneas, or Alcmena holding Hercules, or Andromache holding Astyanax. The story of the flight into Egypt has been painted many times, he says. Without ever saying that it should not be painted, he notes that the image

⁴⁵ Theodulf, *Opus Caroli*, 1. 18, ed. FREEMAN, pp. 189-192.

⁴⁶ Theodulf, *Opus Caroli*, ed. FREEMAN, "Wort- und Sachregister", p. 647.

⁴⁷ Theodulf, *Opus Caroli*, 3. 23, ed. FREEMAN, p. 447. See H. KESSLER, " 'Facies bibliothecae revelata': Carolingian art as spiritual seeing", in: *Testo e immagine nell'Alto Medioevo*, 2 vols. (Spoleto, 1994: *Atti delle Settimane di Studio del Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo* 41), 2, pp. 533-594, esp. pp. 536-537.

⁴⁸ G. CAVALLI, "Testo e immagine: Una frontiera ambigua", in: *Testo e immagine nell'Alto Medioevo*, 1, pp. 34-35, 38, 47-54.

can be found on walls, drinking vessels, silken garments, and carpets. Are all of these objects to be adored? In a scene of Bethlehem, what is to be made of the animals?⁴⁹

Where Theodulf differs from Augustine and others is in his reluctance to equate what the mind's eye sees with a sort of visualization of a biblical or saintly figure. To understand how his thinking proceeds, we need to remind ourselves that he castigated the Byzantines for taking literally things in the scriptures that were to be understood, to be "seen" as it were, typologically. One cannot worship an image partly because no "manufactured" object deserves worship, partly because any such object is indeterminate, but mainly because the ends of one's contemplation will, in his view, stop at the surface of the image, just as in a defective contemplation of scripture one's understanding will stop at the words on the page and not penetrate to the deeper meanings behind them. Given that Theodulf says that pictures can "commemorate past deeds" it is possible that he would have permitted icons to play a role in actualizing a mental image of something that one already knew, that one had heard or read, but he never says this explicitly.

In understanding that typology was for Theodulf the highest kind of sight, or led directly to it, we unravel what might otherwise seem paradoxical. Theodulf has usually been portrayed as being hostile to art but in fact he adopted, as we have seen, a posture of calculated indifference where material, visual representations are concerned. Art accomplished little that was truly important and risked distraction and confusion. But he also says that "we" – he means the Franks and he is criticizing the Byzantines for letting churches fall into a state of disrepair – "cover our churches with beautiful images out of respect for the holy place and the acts of worship that take place there".⁵⁰ To my knowledge, no one in the West before Theodulf had made this argument in defense of "decoration". It is implicit in Bede's *De templo*, but that is all. Theodulf was no iconoclast. Neither was he a boor or a philistine. He was more sensitive to beauty, he had a keener aesthetic appreciation, than any of his contemporaries, so far as we can now tell.

Theodulf was captivated by beauty. In his ekphrasis on a silver vase covered with images of the labours of Hercules he revelled in descriptions of the beauty of the object.⁵¹ But in the *Opus Caroli regis* he asked if painters were

⁴⁹ Theodulf, *Opus Caroli*, 4, 21, ed. FREEMAN, pp. 539-540. Cf. n. 39 above.

⁵⁰ Theodulf, *Opus Caroli*, 4, 3, ed. FREEMAN, pp. 494-495.

⁵¹ Theodulf, *Carmina*, 28, *Contra Iudices*, ed. in: *Poetae Latini aevi Carolini (I)*, ed. E. DÜMMER (Berlin, 1881: MGH PP 1), pp. 493-517, esp. 498 ff. The most recent discussion is L. NEES, *A Tainted Mantle: Hercules and the Classical Tradition at the Carolingian Court*

holier than other craftsmen: carpenters, sculptors, bronze founders, engravers, stonemasons, woodworkers, or even farmers.⁵² He wondered – baiting the Byzantines all the while – if a beautiful image is holier than an ugly one. Is an image with gold or other precious materials holier than a plain one? Are poor people deprived of expensive images and therefore of essential spiritual benefits?⁵³ Theodulf was, in short, a connoisseur, but he bracketed the objects of his delight so as to emphasize their power to bring pleasure while also acknowledging their capacity to activate the memory.

Among the contemporaries of Alcuin and Theodulf we can detect others who talked as they did. A few examples will serve to show that the ideas evident in the writings of Alcuin and Theodulf enjoyed some currency. Paulinus of Aquileia (ca. 726-802) exclaimed “Oh how cleverly the ancient enemy leads us astray by his deception, drawing blindness like a veil before our mind’s eye, so that we cannot discern the joys of this world or the joys of the heavenly kingdom”⁵⁴ Smaragdus (ca. 780-ca. 830) made several pertinent comments in his *Collectiones*, a commentary on the *Liber Comitis*. In one place he said that one can see the son of God in his human fragility but the exalted deity can only be seen with the mind’s eye.⁵⁵ Later he added that it is possible to differentiate the carnal and the spiritual eyes, those of the body and the mind’s eye.⁵⁶ In his *Exposition of the Rule of St. Benedict* Smaragdus spoke of those suffering in Gehenna and drew a vivid picture before the eyes of his readers:

We ought to draw these and similar things before our mind’s eye and to fear with exceeding terror a Hell of unending fire, and beyond this we ought to think very hard and intently with our mind’s eye wide open how awful it would be to be excluded from that joy of divine contemplation and to be cast down into the fiery underworld and realm of torture, to be deprived of the most blessed company of all the saints, and to be coupled with demons, to be exiles from our heavenly home and residents of the nether world, to be dead to the blessed life and to be alive to eternal death.⁵⁷

Likewise in his work on Benedict’s *Rule*, Smaragdus says:

(Philadelphia, 1991), pp. 21-143.

⁵² Theodulf, *Opus Caroli*, 3. 22, ed. FREEMAN, p. 438.

⁵³ Theodulf, *Opus Caroli*, 4. 16, ed. FREEMAN, pp. 526-529.

⁵⁴ Paulinus, *Liber Exhortationis*, ed. in: *PL* 99, col. 206B.

⁵⁵ Smaragdus, *Collectiones*, ed. in: *PL* 102, col. 79A-B.

⁵⁶ Smaragdus, *Collectiones*, ed. in: *PL* 102 col. 118D.

⁵⁷ Smaragdus, *Expositio in Regulam B. Benedicti*, ed. in: *PL* 102, col. 778C-D.

Because it is not possible to keep in the little dwelling that is our heart both memory and forgetfulness equally, we ought to drive killing oblivion from out hearts and retain beneficent memory. For when damnation is put to flight from the closed-up forgetfulness of the heart, then fruitful things grow in us, memory floods over us, and the teachings of the Lord are drawn back before our mind's eye, how we might please him and keep his commandments.⁵⁸

In his *Crown of Monks* Smaragdus holds that "if we lost our eyes, we would not suffer greatly. For we would have lost only the tool of arrogance and we would gaze upon the glory of God with our more internal eyes (*interioribus oculis*)".⁵⁹ In his *Commentary on Genesis* Wicbod (fl. ca. 775-ca. 810) argues that the lesson of the serpent in the garden is that when the carnal eyes are opened, the internal eye is closed.⁶⁰ And Alcuin gets the last word, again drawn from his *Commentary on the Apocalypse*: "Whoever has his eyes blinded by dust, let him apply salve to recover his sight. That is, whoever slips down through earthly delights, let him recall the worldly poverty of his redeemer, that the future rewards of the saints might be envisioned with his internal eyes".⁶¹ Taken together, these passages reveal a consistent concern at the turn of the ninth century with internal, mental sight. The implication is that what one saw with the eyes of the body, what one saw "*carnaliter*", was far less important than what one saw with the mind's eye, with spiritual perception. "Seeing" visible things was less important, less spiritually beneficial, than "seeing" invisible things. Theodulf's calculated indifference was in fact widely shared albeit articulated differently, perhaps because he was charged to respond to the *Acta* of II Nicaea whereas his contemporaries spoke in more general terms and usually in the context of biblical exegesis.

After some quotations from Alcuin, we turned to Late Antiquity to discover the sources for his ideas and words. Primarily we found them in Augustine but we also discerned a path leading through the *Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, John Cassian, Isidore, Caesarius of Arles, Gregory of Tours, and Gregory the Great. Theodulf's ideas and words have other roots in Late Antiquity as well. His major source was the *Acta* of II Nicaea but those documents rest on a solid foundation of older texts, particularly texts from the Greek Christian tradition. There were authors and texts cited at Nicaea which Theodulf did not know. He expressed some frustration over his ignorance, but also stressed his own

⁵⁸ Smaragdus, *Expositio in Regulam B. Benedicti*, ed. in: *PL* 102, col. 809A-B.

⁵⁹ Smaragdus, *Diadema Monachorum*, 31, ed. in: *PL* 102, col. 626D.

⁶⁰ Wicbod, *Libri Quaestionum super Librum Genesis*, ed. in: *PL* 96, col. 1159D-1160A.

⁶¹ Alcuin, *Commentariorum in Apocalypsin Libri Quinque*, ed. in: *PL* 100, col. 1114D.

reliance on the Latin Christian tradition.⁶² In a few cases, he was quite familiar with works cited at Nicaea and he ventured his own interpretations of those works. One more return to the world of Late Antiquity will open a perspective on the background to both II Nicaea and Theodulf. In particular, two points will emerge with some clarity. Of more limited significance is the fact that Theodulf knew so well, and argued so effectively about, a long tradition that scholars have usually regarded as a closed book where the Carolingians are concerned. Of broader significance is the fact that Greek Christian thought moved in meta-physical directions that found no hospitable reception in the West. Why this should have been so is a worthy subject for future investigations.

In the fourth century four basic arguments about Christian art emerged. Constantia, Constantine's sister, asked Eusebius (ca. 260-ca. 340) to provide her with an image of Christ. He refused to do so on the grounds that he could not decide which image he ought to provide "the true and unalterable one which bears his essential characteristic, or the one which he took up for our sake when he assumed the form of a servant".⁶³ In his *Life of Constantine*, however, Eusebius mentions with no criticism two images which the emperor erected in Constantinople, one of a good shepherd and another of Daniel in the lion's den.⁶⁴ Eusebius was prepared to accept images that functioned as symbols, that pointed to realities beyond themselves, realities that were invisible. It is hard to penetrate Eusebius's rhetoric and to ascertain if there were *some* image which he might have given Constantia.

Secondly, in a homily on the Holy Spirit, Basil of Caesarea (ca. 330-379), in attempting to explain the relationship between the Son and the Holy Spirit, adverted to the images of the emperor. He made two points. First, no one viewing an image of the emperor would intend to suggest that there were two emperors by saying "this is the emperor". Secondly, any act of respect or reverence performed before the emperor's image was referred to the emperor himself

⁶² Theodulf, *Opus Caroli*, 2. 17, ed. FREEMAN, p. 267. He here complains that "the life and teaching" of Gregory of Nyssa is unknown to him. Still, he says, the way the Greeks cite Gregory seems irrelevant to the matter at hand. Moreover, he continues, "after the prophetic and evangelical books, and the apostolic writings, the life and teaching of the Latin doctors is known to us, and of the Greeks too who were Catholics and whose writings have been translated into our language, and we are completely happy with their dogmas".

⁶³ Eusebius, *Letter to Constantia*, tr. C. MANGO, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire 312-1453* (Toronto, 1986), pp. 16-17. The Greek text is in PG 20, col. 1545-1549.

⁶⁴ Eusebius, *Life of Constantine*, 3. 49, tr. A. CAMERON and S.G. HALL (Oxford, 1999), p. 140. The Greek text is in PG 20, col. 1109A-B.

who was not physically present.⁶⁵ Again, one looked at something that was present in an effort to see through it something or someone that was not present.

Thirdly, Gregory of Nyssa (ca. 330-ca. 395) opened a discussion of the affective powers of images. Speaking of an image of the sacrifice of Isaac he says "I have often seen this tragic event depicted in painting and could not walk by the sight of it without shedding tears".⁶⁶

Fourthly, Gregory of Nyssa was also the first to speak about art's didactic value. "Painting", he says, "even if it is silent, is capable of speaking from the wall and of being of the greatest benefit When scenes of martyrdom are painted on the walls of a church ... this is of the greatest benefit and is like writing".⁶⁷ Verbal and visual eloquence are coupled in Gregory of Nyssa. *Graphe* could mean for him a painting or writing, just as *historiai* could mean picture or story. Gregory compares pictures to "a book endowed with speech". Gradually this became a topos in writing about art.⁶⁸ Somehow, pictures could be used to teach.

Almost simultaneously, the first objections to pictorial representations and to physical images began to appear. Epiphanius of Salamis (ca. 315-403) articulated four arguments that echoed down through the next several centuries.⁶⁹

⁶⁵ Basil, *De spiritu sancto* 17. 44, tr. MANGO, *Byzantine Art*, p. 47. The Greek text is in PG 32, col. 149. H.G. THÜMMEL, *Die Frühgeschichte der ostkirchlichen Bilderlehre: Texte und Untersuchungen zur Zeit vor dem Bilderstreit* (Berlin, 1992: *Texte und Untersuchungen zur geschichte der althristlichen Literatur* 139), pp. 53-55 argues that Basil was speaking in similes and not talking about art per se.

⁶⁶ Gregory of Nyssa, *De deitate Filii et Spiritus sancti*, tr. in MANGO, *Byzantine Art*, p. 34. The Greek text is in PG 46, col. 572C.

⁶⁷ Gregory of Nyssa, *Oratio Laudatoria sancti magni martyris Theodori*, tr. in MANGO, *Byzantine Art*, p. 37. The Greek text is in PG 46, col. 737D-740B. The first part of the translation is Mango's, the second, my own.

⁶⁸ H. MAGUIRE, *Art and Eloquence in Byzantium* (Princeton, NJ, 1981), pp. 9-12.

⁶⁹ L. BRUBAKER and J. HALDON, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era (ca. 680-850): The Sources: An Annotated Survey* (Aldershot, 2001: *Birmingham Byzantine and Ottoman Monographs* 7), p. 257 and n. 8 do not discuss Epiphanius, who falls before the time covered by their book, and do not take a position on the authenticity of his writings, which I take to be essentially genuine. On Epiphanius see: THÜMMEL, *Frühgeschichte*, pp. 65-73; J.-M. SANSTERRE, "La parole, le texte et l'image selon les auteurs byzantins des époques iconoclastes et posticonoclastes", in: *Testo e immagine nell'Alto Medioevo*, 1, pp. 204-05; P. MARAVAL, "Épiphanie, 'docteur des iconoclastes' ", in: *Nicée II, 787-1987*, ed. F. BOESPFLUG and N. LOSSKY, (Paris, 1987), pp. 51-62; E. KITZINGER, "The cult of images in the age before iconoclasm", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 8 (1954), pp. 92-95; N.H. BAYNES, "Idolatry and the early Church", in his *Byzantine Studies and Other Essays* (London, 1955), pp. 126-28; P. MAAS, "Die ikonoklastische Episode in dem Brief Epiphanius und Johannes", *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 30 (1929-1930), pp. 279-286; K. HOLL, "Die Schriften des Epiphanius gegen die Bilderverehrung", in his *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kirchengeschichte* 3 vols. (Tübingen, 1927-1928), 2, pp. 351-

He dismissed Christian representations as idols and he was one of the first to appeal explicitly to a scriptural prohibition. He considered it foolish to look at a picture of an apostle to be reminded of him for what one needed reminding about was the deeds and teachings of the apostles. Epiphanius criticized the ignorance and presumption of painters, insisting that they gave vent to their own whims and produced markedly different representations of the same people. Artists worked with lifeless matter in making their pictures.⁷⁰ Finally, he elaborated what came to be called the “ethical theory” of images: The only true images of the apostles, say, are people who keep their teachings.⁷¹

Leontios of Neapolis (seventh century) opens further dimensions of the image-talk of the period. Amidst many points raised in his hypothetical dialogue with a Jew, he says “when two pieces of wood are put together to make a cross, I adore the figure on account of Christ who was crucified on it; afterwards, if the pieces of wood were separated again, I would throw them into the fire”.⁷² Leontios’ words signal several important issues. First, he was agitated

364. These authors, whom I find persuasive, represent the traditional view. Recently P. SPECK, on the grounds of alleged textual anachronisms, has argued that what we read is an eighth-century confection, perhaps by a writer named Hypatius: ΓΡΑΦΑΙΣ Η ΓΛΥΦΑΙΣ: *Zu dem Fragment des Hypatios von Ephesos über die Bilder mit einem Anhang zu den Dialog mit einem Juden des Leontios von Neapolis* (Bonn, 1984: *Poikila Byzantina* 4, varia 1), pp. 211-272, esp. pp. 221-241.

⁷⁰ The writings of Epiphanius of Salamis are preserved in fragments in later writers, particularly the Patriarch Nicephorus. See G. OSTROGORSKY, *Studien zur Geschichte der byzantinischen Bilderstreites* (Breslau, 1929; repr. Amsterdam, 1964), pp. 67-75. The key texts are translated in MANGO, *Byzantine Art*, pp. 41-43.

⁷¹ M.V. ANASTOS, “The ethical theory of images formulated by the iconoclasts in 754 and 815”, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 8 (1954), pp. 153-160.

⁷² Leontios of Neapolis, ed. in: PG 93, col. 1597B-1609A. There is a new edition (pp. 66-72) with a French translation (pp. 72-78) in V. DÉROCHE, “L’Apologie contre les Juifs de Léontios de Néapolis”, *Travaux et Mémoires* 12 (1994), pp. 45-104; cf. his “L’Authenticité de l’Apologie contre les Juifs de Léontios de Néapolis”, *Bulletin de correspondance hellénique*, 90 (1986), pp. 655-69. See also: THÜMMEL, *Frühgeschichte*, pp. 127-36, 233-36, who stresses Leontius’s later influence. As so often, Speck calls into question the authenticity of this text (P. SPECK, “Graphais ē Glyphais: Zu dem Fragment des Hypatios von Ephesos über die Bilder ...”, in: *Varia I* (Bonn, 1984: *Poikila Byzantina* 4), pp. 211-272, at pp. 242-248); *Anthologia Palatina I, I. und das Apsismosaik der Hagia Sophia* (Bonn, 1987: *Poikila Byzantina* 6, varia 2), pp. 315-322; “Schweinfleisch und Bilderkult: zur Bilderdebatte in den sogenannten Judendialogen”, in: *TO ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΟΝ: Studies in Honour of Speros Vryonis, Jr.*, ed. J. LANGDON et al., 2 vols. (New York, 1983), 1, pp. 367-383. Once again I follow Speck’s critics; in addition to Déroche, see: SANSTERRE, “Parole”, p. 205; C. BARBER, “The truth in painting: Iconoclasm and identity in early-medieval art”, *Speculum* 72 (1997), 1019-1036, esp. pp. 1025-1033; P. WEITMANN, *Sukzession und Gegenwart: Zu theoretischen Äußerungen über bildende Künste und Musik von Basileios bis Hrabanus Maurus* (Wiesbaden, 1997); *Spätantike – Frühes Christentum – Byzanz:*

about the materiality of images. Pope Gregory also said that *manufactae* were not to be worshipped and Theodulf hammered away at that point.

Secondly, there is the matter of words and their meanings. At the beginning of Book 10 of *The City of God* Augustine attempted a careful delineation of the Greek and Latin vocabulary of worship.⁷³ Isidore of Seville worked his way through some of the same verbal tangles⁷⁴ as did the poorly known seventh-century Byzantine writer Stephen of Bostra.⁷⁵ In the early eighth century John of Damascus reflected on this vocabulary even more fully than Augustine had done.⁷⁶ Practices mattered but so did words. Conventional wisdom holds that Greeks carefully distinguished between *proskynesis* and *latreia* whereas Latin writers either conflated these words or translated each indifferently with *venerare* and *adorare*. In fact, sharp equivalences between the Greek and Latin vocabularies did not occur until the thirteenth century when tidy and systematizing scholastics straightened out a millennium of verbal uncertainty.⁷⁷ In Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages it is almost always possible to understand what particular authors are saying but impossible to predict what words they will use. Three possibilities arose: No acts of worship (denoted by different words, usually *adorare*, *colere*, *diligere*, or *venerare*, but possibly others too)

Kunst im ersten Jahrtausend, Reihe B: Studien und Perspektiven 2), pp. 128-132; C. MANGO, "A Byzantine hagiographer at work: Leontios of Neapolis", in: *Byzanz und der Westen: Studien zur Kunst des europäischen Mittelalters*, ed. I. HUTTER (Vienna, 1984: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, phil.-hist. klasse, Sitzungsberichte 432), pp. 25-41. Mango dates Leontios's work to 610-650.

⁷³ Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, 10. 1, ed. B. DOMBART and A. KALB (Turnhout, 1955: CCSL 47), pp. 272-274.

⁷⁴ Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae* 1. 73. 32 and 8. 11. 4-5, ed. LINDSAY, pp. 74 and 328.

⁷⁵ Stephen apparently wrote late in the seventh century. In Rome in about 731 his writing, or some portion of it, was translated into Latin. In, perhaps, the 760s the work was translated back into Greek, possibly in connection with a council of three Oriental patriarchs in Jerusalem. The fragments themselves survive in MS Paris, BN, gr. 1115, an iconophile florilegium that was probably prepared in Rome in the early to late 770s. See A. ALEXAKIS, "Some Remarks on the colophon of the Codex Parisinus Graecus 1115", *Revue d'histoire des textes* 22 (1992), pp. 131-143 and ID., "Stephen of Bostra, *Fragmenta Contra Iudaeos*: A new edition", *Jahrbuch für Österreichische Byzantinistik* 43 (1993), pp. 45-60 (with the edition at pp. 51-55).

⁷⁶ John of Damascus, *Contra imaginum calumniatores orationes tres*, ed. as vol. 3 of *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, ed. B. KOTTER OSB (Berlin, 1975: *Patristische Texte und Studien* 17). John's views are liberally scattered through his three 'orations'. See esp. 3. 16-25. On John himself, see G. LOUTH, *St. John Damascene: Tradition and Originality in Byzantine Theology* (Oxford, 2002), esp. ch. 7.

⁷⁷ The views of Thomas Aquinas and Bonaventure are well known. For brief expositions of post-Nicaean and post-Carolingian thought, see: U. ECO, *Art and Beauty in the Middle Ages*, tr. H. BREDIN (New Haven, 1986), pp. 92-104 and J.-C. SCHMITT, *Le corps des images: Essais sur la culture visuelle au moyen âge* (Paris, 2002), pp. 63-95.

may be performed before or with respect to an image; acts of worship may be performed before an image as long as the worshipper acknowledges that such acts are different from and inferior to the acts reserved to God alone; acts of worship may be performed before an image because the image itself is somehow holy.

Thirdly, Leontios hints at specific acts of worship connected with images. Across the sixth and seventh centuries, but always in the eastern Mediterranean or just occasionally in Rome, we encounter stories of people kissing or embracing images. Images were placed in homes and shops or carried in bags. Byzantine armies carried them into battle and emperors hung them from the walls of Constantinople in times of siege. Images were believed to heal physical afflictions and ward off demons. Some people at least began to think that images possessed spiritual potency and such people began to perform acts of various kinds that were designed to tap that potency. Here was a wholly new problem for those who wished to use words to describe what was seen when looking at a miraculous image.⁷⁸

As we have seen, the problem of the indeterminacy of images – they looked like what each person saw in his mind's eye or what any artist wished to paint – and doubts occasioned by the materials out of which images were made had another reflex in the sixth and seventh centuries: the *acheiropoietai*, images not made by human hands. From modest beginnings in stories about two or three miraculous images, the *acheiropoietai* went on developing until Rome alone had dozens of such images by the twelfth century. Surely, the images sent to Abgar of Edessa by Jesus himself, or the image of Christ's face impressed on Veronica's veil, or the Lucan painting of Mary in Rome got around some very pointed objections to images. First, God willed them so he could not object to them. Secondly, since some were heaven-sent and others done from life, there could be no question of wilful invention on the part of artists. Thirdly, in so far as the images had miraculous origins, no one could dismiss their dross matter.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ The classic statement of this view is KITZINGER, "Icons". His views have been challenged most convincingly by L. BRUBAKER, "Icons before iconoclasm?", in: *Morfologie sociali e culturali in Europa fra Tarda Antichità e Alto Medioevo*, 2 vols. (Spoleto, 1998: *Atti delle Settimane di Studio del Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo* 45), 2, pp. 1215-1254.

⁷⁹ Amidst a profusion of solid contributions particular attention may be drawn to: A. CAMERON, "The Language of images: The rise of icons and Christian representation", in: *The Church and the Arts*, ed. D. WOOD (Oxford, 1992: *Studies in Church History* 28), pp. 1-42 and EAD., "The history of the image of Edessa: The telling of a story", in: *Okeanos: Essays Presented to Ihor Ševčenko* (Cambridge, MA, 1983: *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 7), pp. 80-94. The classic study is E. VONDOBSCHÜTZ, *Christusbilder: Untersuchungen zur christlichen Legende* (Leipzig, 1899). Recent and comprehensive is G. WOLF, *Salus Populi Romani: Die Geschichte römischer*

Conclusions

What the body's eye saw could delight, instruct, and move. What the mind's eye could see did these same things and also, perhaps, induced a deeper spiritual reflection. Matter was useful but insignificant in and of itself. To some, the Exodus prohibition was absolute because anything the body's eye could see tempted the viewer to idolatry. To others, mental pictures were less objectionable, perhaps, than material ones but nevertheless indicative of a weak and deficient spirituality. Pictures were unauthentic because they took shape as indeterminate and wilful creations of artists. Moreover, saints and stories possessed truths that could be communicated by words but never by pictures. Seeing was inferior to hearing or to hearing's adjutant, reading.

As we have seen, both Alcuin and Theodulf, as well as their contemporaries Paulinus, Smaragdus, and Wicbod, displayed an impressive command of all these arguments for and against material and mental images. They drew their language from the Bible and from the Church Fathers. They deployed that language in discussions of profound mysteries such as the Incarnation and of visual representations on boards and silks, on walls and apses. Always they were concerned to erect barriers – barriers to thought, word, and deed – between the relatively unimportant, albeit sometimes beautiful, things that the body's eyes could see and the ultimate realities that only the mind's eye could see.

In the ninth century, the Carolingians returned often to images, vision, and their respective vocabularies.⁸⁰ We have a thick dossier produced at an episcopal colloquy held in Paris in 825, treatises by Dungal Scottus (*fl. ca. 784-ca. 827*), Jonas of Orléans (*ca. 760-ca. 841*), and Agobard of Lyons (*ca. 769-840*), the fragmentarily preserved writings of Claudius of Turin (*† ca. 830*), and finally scattered remarks in the writings of Hrabanus Maurus (776/784-856) and Walafrid Strabo (*ca. 808-849*). The West had a genuine debate about images, a debate which turned nasty at several points. The nastiness was occasioned by the authentic iconoclasm of Claudius and the nervous conservatism of Agobard who feared that his episcopal confrères were becoming too soft on images. The basic arguments advanced in the ninth century did not venture much beyond what had been said in the age of Charlemagne. Possessing images was legitimized by tradition. Adoring or destroying images was heresy. Claudius of Turin, the great exception to this rule, called destroying images godly. Later

Kultbilder im Mittelalter (Weinheim, 1990).

⁸⁰ These subjects will be treated comprehensively in my forthcoming book *Images and the Carolingians*.

writers relaxed Theodulf's reservations. Images, they taught, might serve as transmission points for prayers. They could move and they could teach. Above all they served as aids to the simple. On one point alone all the Frankish writers agreed: Images were not holy, performed no wonders, and deserved no worship. East and West were sharply divided on this point. No one in the West looked at an image and saw an agent of miracles or even saw miraculous possibilities in images. These later writers made less use of phrases such as "the mind's eye" or the "internal eye" than their predecessors had done, but they agreed with writers of the age of Charlemagne that whatever we see carnally is inferior to what we can see spiritually.

Clifford Geertz once remarked that "art is notoriously hard to talk about".⁸¹ It seems to me that the Carolingians found art rather easy to talk about, or at any rate to argue about, because it could be seen carnally and was not therefore mysterious or problematic. What they had a hard time talking about was what could only be seen spiritually, what only appeared in the mind's eye, what at once required and defied understanding.

⁸¹ C. GEERTZ, "Art as a cultural system", in his *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology* (New York, 1983), p. 94.

Metaphor and Meaning in Early Medieval Reliquaries

CYNTHIA HAHN

Already in the earliest examples recorded in texts, relic fragments exchanged as gifts, were enclosed in what we have come to call reliquaries.¹ Such enclosures honoured the relic and protected it from profane touch. They even could add value – not only because of the worth of materials, but also because precious containers defined the encapsulated object as deserving of conspicuous honour and veneration.

At the same time, surprisingly, relics were to some degree obscured by their reliquaries. In the early middle ages in the West, relics were typically sealed in the interior of the reliquary, more or less permanently out of view. As a consequence, it fell to the reliquary to take up the task of adequately representing the value and meaning of the object or objects enclosed within it. The use of precious materials was not sufficient to communicate the wide range of desirable messages, and artists or patrons turned to other more rhetorical means of conveying meaning.

¹ Important early types of relic fragments include: body fragments, i.e. bones etc.; *eulogiae*, i.e. secondary relics such as dust or oil, usually from the Holy Land; and *brandea*, i.e. secondary relics created by touching a piece of linen to a relic. For a specific mention of enclosing relic fragments in a reliquary, see the account of the finding of the true Cross by Helena: J. W. DRIJVERS, *Helena Augusta: The Mother of Constantine the Great and the Legend of the Finding of the True Cross*, (Leiden, 1992: *Brill's Studies in Intellectual History* 27), p. 108. For the fragmentation of bodies, often said never to be practised in the early medieval West, see: N. HERMANN-MASCARD, *Les Reliques des saints: Formation coutumière d'un droit* (Paris: 1975), pp. 39 ff.

In his discussion of the “redende Reliquiar”, the “Speaking Reliquary”, perhaps the most striking and influential modern denomination of medieval relic types, Josef Braun argued that such reliquaries literally spoke their contents;² that is, the exterior shape clearly revealed the relic contained within. This description suits the small Carolingian or Ottonian reliquary of the nail from Trier in which the lavishly ornamented container seems to have no purpose other than to conform to the shape of its contents.³ It is problematic, however, when applied to so-called body part relics such as arm relics or head relics, of which the earliest examples are also of Carolingian and Ottonian date. In the latter examples, more often than not, the reliquary contains some portion of one saint’s arm or skull, together with small relics of many other saints. In what sense, then, does the exterior reveal the interior? We may have an intuitive notion that these objects ‘speak’, but if so what do they say? Of course, the answer must be that their speech is neither direct nor simple.

For most early medieval reliquaries, there is no tightly bound relationship between relic and artistic presentation like that of signifier to signified; no conventionally fixed correlation of meaning as in a sign or symbol. Neither, typically, is there an allegorical program in which accepted and established theological meaning is reiterated or presented. Rather, the nature of representation in the reliquaries I will discuss is closer to the ambiguity and suggestiveness of what Augustine called the “figurative sign” or what we generally today characterize as the operation of metaphor.⁴ Just as metaphor uses the

² J. BRAUN *Die Reliquiare des christlichen Kultes und ihre Entwicklung* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1940). For other general literature on reliquaries, see A. ANGENENDT, *Heilige und Reliquien: Die Geschichte ihres Kultes vom frühen Christentum bis zur Gegenwart* (Munich, 1997); H. VAN OS, *The Way to Heaven: Relic Veneration in the Middle Ages* (Amsterdam, 2000); A. LEGNER, *Reliquien in Kunst und Kult zwischen Antike und Aufklärung* (Darmstadt, 1995).

³ *Schatzkunst Trier*, catalogue of an exhibition organized by the Bischofliches Generalvikariat Trier (Trier, 1984), p. 97.

⁴ In his *De Doctrina Christiana*, Augustine defines a sign precisely in terms of its action: “a sign is a thing which, over and above the impression it makes on the senses, causes something else to come in to the mind as a consequence of itself” (2. 1. 1). He notes that “signs are either proper or figurative....[and that] Signs are figurative when the things themselves which we indicate by the proper names are used to signify something else” (2. 10. 15). Augustine admits that figures present “difficulty in the seeking [for understanding]” but as a result of the effort, one experiences a lively pleasure that prevents satiety and sloth (2. 6. 8). Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana*, ed. and tr. R.P.H. GREEN, *On Christian Teaching* (Oxford, 1997). Clearly metaphor in grammatical treatises of the Middle Ages was seen in a more limited sense than it is today. It was often discussed as a shortened form of simile, without the ‘like’ or ‘as’. H. LAUSBERG, *Handbuch der literarischen Rhetorik: Eine Grundlegung der Literaturwissenschaft*. (Munich, 1960), pp. 285-292.

juxtaposition of two unlike elements to push the listener or viewer to enter an imaginative consideration of meaning, these reliquaries use unexpected imagery to provoke thought. A productive tension between terms is created in which the result, as Max Black argues, “suppresses some details, emphasizes others – in short, organizes our view” of the subject.⁵ We will return to a consideration of the qualities of metaphor somewhat later in this essay, but let us now turn to a consideration of how, at significant junctures, metaphor guided the choice and design of reliquaries.

Perhaps the earliest and most obvious suggestive shape that was given to reliquaries was that of the tomb or sarcophagus.⁶ Full-sized or miniature, it is perhaps an obvious and appropriate container for a body, no longer alive. Anatole Frolov called this shaping a metaphor for the grave.⁷ Although it does suggest other interesting associations when used for relics,⁸ the primary connotation of death articulates an unsatisfactory message about the status of saints, who were asserted to be “alive” in their relics.⁹ More positive and surprisingly suggestive images were soon put forward.

One sort of box, well-supplied with useful interior compartments and readily available in the late antique world, was the doctor’s kit or medicine box. A sixth-century ivory example from Dumbarton Oaks pictures *Hygieia* or Health on the lid and would have been ideal for the storage of small relics, *brandea*, or *eulogiae*, allowing secure transport (Figs. 1 and 2). Such a container forcefully

⁵ M. BLACK, *Models and Metaphors: Studies in Language and Philosophy* (Ithaca, 1962), p. 41; see also M. BLACK, “More about metaphor”, in: *Metaphor and Thought*, ed. A. ORTONY (Cambridge, 1979; 1993²), pp. 19-41 (Black’s essay was unrevised from the first edition in 1979). For metaphor see also: P. HENLE, “Metaphor”, in: *Language, Thought, and Culture*, ed. P. HENLE (Ann Arbor, 1958), pp. 173-95; P. RICOEUR, *La métaphore vive* (Paris, 1975); and S. TESELLE, *Speaking in Parables: A Study in Metaphor and Theology* (Philadelphia, 1975). More recent investigation of metaphor posits it as the basis for all language and understanding: M.J. REDDY, “The conduit metaphor: A case of frame conflict in our language about language”, in: *Metaphor and Thought*, pp. 164-201; and G. LAKOFF, “The contemporary theory of metaphor”, in: *Metaphor and Thought*, pp. 202-251. Although she speaks of an “articulate symbol” (p. 52) rather than a metaphor, Langer discusses the working of some of these ideas in art: S. LANGER, *Feeling and Form: A Theory of Art* (New York, 1953).

⁶ A sarcophagus shaped marble reliquary from Bulgaria is pictured in: *Age of Spirituality: Late Antique and Early Christian Art, Third to Seventh Century*, ed. K. WEITZMANN (New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1979), p. 631, No. 569.

⁷ A. FROLOW, *Les Reliquaires de la Vraie Croix* (Paris, 1965: *Archives de l’orient chétien* 8), p. 25.

⁸ Many of these tiny sarcophagi were buried in altars and recall the text of Apc 6, 9.

⁹ P. BROWN, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago, 1981), pp. 3 and *passim*.

recalled the most publicly important quality of relics – their healing powers.¹⁰ These boxes may have been used to carry relics to the sick (note the rings to affix a strap) and were thus important early examples of portable reliquaries. Those that have survived, however, were for the most part immured in altars.

Perhaps the most powerful early reliquary shape on public view was the Cross. That is, not so much a cross-shaped reliquary but a Cross that did double duty, or better, was made more powerful and sacred by the presence of relics. Such reliquary crosses are attested in texts from as early as the fifth or sixth century and early examples, such as one mentioned by Gregory the Great, sometimes contain the relics of saints instead of the relics of the Cross.¹¹

But what can be said about the Cross as a reliquary? The choice of form seems obvious, perhaps even undeserving of comment – what one might term a dead metaphor. If we try to recapture some of its liveliness, we will recall that the metaphor of Cross held the power to shock in its own time, especially as an emblem of victory that had its basis in the sign of a humiliating death. Indeed, the Biblical meaning of the Cross lies in its importance as a metaphor of potentially forceful impact upon thought. Paul argues that he preaches “not with wisdom of words”, but with that of the Cross. “For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God” (1 Cor 1, 17-18). Although here Paul may be presenting the Cross as a symbol, a thing that both conceals and reveals, he is further indicating the confounding nature of the Cross and its capacity to be preached as a “sign”, notwithstanding his specification that it transcends the “wisdom of words”. The sign, its shape and all its associations of life and victory escape the confinement of mere wise words, working, I suggest, as we have defined the action of a metaphor.

It is noteworthy that even Christian iconoclastic literature reveals the continuing faith in the exceptional nature of the Cross. For example, the *Opus*

¹⁰ Most later byzantine reliquaries take this shape: a box with a sliding lid. M.C. ROSS, *Catalogue of the Byzantine and Early Mediaeval Antiquities in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection* 3 (Locust Valley, 1962-1972), p. 22, No. 10.

¹¹ The earliest attested cross-shaped reliquary is that used to dedicate a chapel of the Cross at St. Peter's by Pope Symmachus (498-514): FROLOW, *Reliquaires*, p. 117. Gregory the Great sent a Cross with relics including the chains of Peter and parts of Lawrence's grill to the governor of Gaul: “*Transmisimus vero beati Petri Apostoli benedictionem, crucem parvulam, cui de catenis eius beneficia sunt inserta ... partes de beati Laurentii craticula*” (Gregory the Great, *Epistolae*, lib. III, ind. XI, ep. 33, ed. P. EWALD and L.M. HARTMANN, *Gregorii I papae Registrum epistolarum*, 2 vols. (Berlin, 1887-1899: MGH EPP 1-2), 1, p. 192. In the ninth century, Anastasius Bibliothecarius notes that *Encolpia* could have relics of the Cross or saints: A. FROLOW, *La Relique de la Vraie Croix*, (Paris, 1961; *Archives de l'Orient Chrétien* 7), p. 226, No. 120.

Caroli regis, also known as the *Libri Carolini* of the late eighth century, condemns many sorts of images but allows the veneration of the Cross, calling it the sign of salvation, the sign of victory, and the insignia of the king. In the *Opus Caroli regis*, only one other class of physical objects deserves veneration, that is, relics. The combination of the two – sign and relic in the reliquary Cross – thus reinforces the potency of both.¹²

The use of the cross shape in reliquaries is a rich subject for investigation, but one that is far too complex for the confines of a short essay. For the purposes of this discussion, I will turn to a less recognizable and perhaps less easily comprehensible shape to begin to explore the utility of metaphors for medieval reliquaries.

Frolow dismissed the purse type as profane and without real significance for the cult of relics.¹³ Indeed, the series of hard-sided gemmed objects popular from the seventh through the tenth centuries, with scattered examples made into the twelfth, bear little resemblance to the soft pouches used to protect and transport relics that most commentators take to be their antecedents. Nevertheless, we can confidently identify the objects as purses because, rather than hollow containers in a generalized box, coffin or church-like forms (all of which they do, in part, resemble), most are thin tall objects purposefully shaped around a wooden core. One early medieval representation, circa 900, in an ivory by the artist Tuotilo of St. Gall, shows the form in which we are interested (Fig. 3): a tiny object whose angled, almost triangular lower portion is suspended from a horizontal element or bar across its top. The purse of the ivory is, in turn, suspended from a Cross which the missionary monk, St. Gall, has affixed in the earth to designate the location of the future monastery of St. Gall. With the hastily made Cross – the text specifies he assembled it on the spot – and the

¹² C. CHAZELLE, *The Crucified God in the Carolingian Era: Theology and Art of Christ's Passion* (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 39–52, comparing the Cross to pictures.

¹³ FROLOW, *Reliquaires*, p. 81 and n. 2. Bibliography on purse reliquaries is not extensive, but Braun discusses the type and Elbern considers them important for issues of ornament: J. BRAUN, "Bursa und Bursareliquiar", in: *Reallexikon zur deutschen Kunstgeschichte* 3 (Stuttgart, 1954), pp. 226–235; V.H. ELBERN, "Das Engerer Bursenreliquiar und die Zierkunst des frühen Mittelalters", *Niederdeutsche Beiträge zur Kunstgeschichte* 10 (1971), pp. 41–102; and ID., "Bildstruktur, Sinnzeichen, Bildaussage: Zusammenfassende Studie zur unifigürlichen Ikonographie im frühen Mittelalter", *Arte medievale* 1 (1984), pp. 17–37. See also: 799, *Kunst und Kultur der Karolingerzeit: Karl der Grosse und Papst Leo III. in Paderborn*, ed. C. STIEGEMANN, and M. WEMHOFF, 3 vols. (Mainz, 1999), 2, Nos. VIII. 15, 16, 17 and 19 (variously referred to as chrismale and phylacteries); and K.H. USENER, "Zur Datierung der Stephansbursa", in: *Miscellanea Pro Arte: Hermann Schnitzler zur Vollendung des 60. Lebensjahres am 13. Januar 1965*, ed. P. BLOCH and J. HOSTER (Düsseldorf, 1965), pp. 37–43. Other bibliography is cited below.

attached *capsellus* with relics of Mary, Desiderius and Maurice, Gall has consecrated the location and called upon Christ to protect it, in this case from a threatening wild bear.¹⁴ With this example, we begin to get an idea of a container used to transport relics that is also useful because it can be suspended and displayed and, furthermore, radiates a certain power.

Nevertheless, one of the most remarkable characteristics of the extant purse-shaped reliquaries in precious materials, as Preston McLane has noted, is that despite the fact that they are shaped to resemble an object that has, as its *raison d'être*, its ability to hold, carry, and dispense its contents, most of the reliquary purses do not open at all and are incapable of participating in any flexible way in the idea of container-ness.¹⁵ The relic contents are generally packed tightly into small internal apertures, usually at the bottom or back of the purse, that are subsequently sealed closed.¹⁶ In contrast to the case of a modern luxury evening bag in which a craftsperson like Judith Leiber plays with a functional purse, shaping it as a fish or a rose, the reliquaries disguise some other sort of thing *as* a purse. It is a strikingly odd form that calls for interpretation. Why is the shape of the purse chosen? Again, like the Cross, the reason seems to be its ability to provide a lively metaphor for the guiding and shaping of the devotee's thoughts and prayers.

Once more a key association comes from a New Testament text. The passage in Luke (Lc 12, 33-34) is familiar primarily from its last line: "Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also". The Gospel text warns Christians against accumulating mundane riches because of their susceptibility to theft and destruction. Rather, it advises, turn to more lasting treasures that reside in heaven.

Is then the relic-purse a symbol of "treasure in heaven" based upon this Biblical text? One might understand the objects in this fashion, but a one-to-one correlation of meaning of this kind does not, finally, stick. The biblical text

¹⁴ "Et cum surrexisset ab oratione, fecit de virga coleria crucem in qua appendit capsellam in qua erant Reliquiae S. Virginis virginum, et Sancti Desiderii almique ducis Mauricii", ed. AASS oct. 7.2, p. 889. The ivory was discussed by H. HORAT, "Ein Bursenreliquiar aus dem Entlebuch", *Zeitschrift für Schweizerische Archäologie und Kunstgeschichte* 39 (1982), pp. 58-75, at p. 63.

¹⁵ P. McLANE, "Some textual sources for the purse as reliquary", *Athanasior* 11 (2003), pp. 17-24. This was a paper produced for my seminar on reliquaries at Florida State. McLane was able to identify the key Gospel texts as well.

¹⁶ D.A. HINTON, S. KEENE and K.E. QUALMANN, "The Winchester reliquary", *Medieval Archaeology*, 25 (1981), pp. 45-77.

warns *against* the earthly purse and earthly riches, arguing that too enticing a treasure will hold the heart back from God. Theologically, the material purse appears to be completely inappropriate. The purse is able to work as an inspirational and thought-provoking metaphor only through a series of associations and associated contexts.¹⁷

In an elaborately artistic inscription on the reverse of the Teuderic purse at Agaune in Switzerland (Figs. 4, front, and 5, back),¹⁸ two donors' names are recorded along with those of two artists and the sponsoring church official, the priest Teuderic, who had the reliquary made in honour of Maurice. The inscription, in effect, records a votive offering made through the manufacture and gift of the purse to house relics. François Bougard has shown that the Luke 12 text was used in precepts for private donations, citing Christ's admonition to sell worldly goods in order to have "treasure in heaven".¹⁹ This offering to the treasury at Agaune thus posits a double and simultaneous operation that the purse accomplishes. It gives away, yet also preserves, wealth. Furthermore, that wealth is both "treasure in heaven" and precious riches held by the church of Saint Maurice.

But lest we attend too closely to the purse as the "focus" of the metaphor, we should recall that its "frame", the relics themselves, are also treasure on earth and in heaven. (These are Black's terms for the parts of a metaphor.) Relics are commonly praised as more precious than gems and gold – the essence of their meaning is that they represent both the mundane and heavenly power of the saint's action. Nevertheless, it is true that they must rely on glittering, luxurious materials to proclaim both their presence and value, honour and nobility.

In the purses, the use of the biblical metaphor of "treasure in heaven" thus becomes both wonderfully abstract, as well as delightfully concrete, operating on more than one level and concerning more than one sort of treasure. The gorgeous metallic and gemmed coverings of reliquaries such as the *Stephansbursa*

¹⁷ Both BLACK, *Models and Metaphors*, and RICOEUR, *La métaphore vive*, focus on the contextual frame and how it changes the reception of the metaphor.

¹⁸ The inscription reads: "Te / uderi / gvs pres / biter in ho / nvre sci mav / ricci fieri i / vssit amen / nordoalaus / et rihlindis / ordenarvnt / fabricare / vndiho / et ello / ficer / unt". P. BOUFFARD, *Saint-Maurice d'Agaune: Trésor de l'abbaye* (Geneva, 1974), p. 64. See also D. THURRE, "Les trésors ecclésiastiques du haut Moyen Age et leur constitution: Éclairage à travers deux exemples helvétiques: Saint-Maurice d'Agaune et Sion", in: *Les Trésors de sanctuaires, de l'Antiquité à l'époque romane*, ed. J.-P. CAILLET and P. BAZIN (Paris, 1996: *Centre de recherches sur l'Antiquité tardive et le haut Moyen Age* 7), pp. 43-81.

¹⁹ F. BOUGARD, "Trésors et mobilia italiens du haut Moyen Age", in: *Les Trésors de sanctuaires*, pp. 161-197, at p. 196.

in Vienna (early ninth century, Figs. 6-7), announce themselves as part of a treasure that "will not wear out", while denying direct tactile or visual access to the saving grace of the relics. A clasp is delineated in gems added in the fifteenth century along the upper edge but this clasp will never be unfastened.²⁰ Similarly, knots or interlace that appear on many of the purses may represent a binding or protective function, further reinforcing the fact that the purses do not open.²¹ The gems on the front of the Vienna purse are arranged in rectilinear patterns generally giving the impression of a Cross (often more clearly marked on other examples). The back was probably always simple (again as in other examples); it is now nineteenth-century gilded silver foil. Not only can we never see the relics the Vienna purse contains or contained, but since the promise is never made that we will see or touch them, they are in some sense removed from us.²² At the same time, they are enclosed in a quintessentially portable reliquary allowing them to be carried among the people.

Most such purses retain the small rings on either side that allowed them to be suspended from the neck and worn against the chest. (A fact that, in part, explains the emphatic difference in ornament from front to back.) There is evidence that bishops carried *capsae* around their necks "on the martyr's feast day" as early as the seventh century and, in the act of thus carrying the relics, it was "as if [the bishops] themselves were reliquaries".²³ Such *capsae* were not so different in form from *chrismale* containing Eucharistic bread that priests and bishops typically carried with them when they travelled.²⁴ It is not unreasonable to imagine that the reliquary purses were ritually carried among the people by the representatives of the church allowing their grace to be 'dispensed'.

We are now in a position to explore the larger context of the metaphor of the purse. Various indications point to a particular association of purse reli-

²⁰ Some clasp shapes, such as the that on the Enger Purse in Berlin, are original.

²¹ See the examples in ELBERN, "Das Engerer Bursenreliquiar".

²² *The Secular and Ecclesiastical Treasures: Illustrated Guide*, ed. by the Vienna Kunsthistorisches Museum (Vienna, 1991), pp. 168-169 (entry by H. TRNEK). The purse was said to originally contain a bit of earth soaked with Stephen's blood. Presently it contains a bit of cloth, presumably a relic, with the seal of the cathedral chapter of Worms.

²³ A note in the Spanish Council of Braga, c. 6: "*agnovimus quosdam de episcopis quod in solennitatibus martyrum ab (ad) ecclesiam progressuri, reliquias collo suo imponant et ut maioris fastus apud homines gloria intumescat (quasi ipsi sint reliquiarum arca). Laevitae albis induti in sellulis eos deportant*" (ed. in: *Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio*, ed. J.D. MANSI, 31 vols. (Florence and Venice, 1759-1798), new edn. by J.B. MARTIN and L. PETIT, 53 vols. (Arnheim and Leipzig, 1901-1927), 11, p. 157, cited by G.J. C. SNOEK, *Medieval Piety from Relics to the Eucharist: A Process of Mutual Interaction* (Leiden, 1995), pp. 89 and 258).

²⁴ SNOEK, *Medieval Piety*, pp. 92 and 98.

quaries, above all, with the Apostles: Luke reports that first Christ sent the Apostles “without purse, bag, or sandals” and they lacked for nothing (Lc 22, 35). However, afterwards (Lc 22, 36), Christ sends them out with a purse and a bag and even a sword. Obviously the intention of the latter injunction is that Christ’s disciples are to journey with purpose. The purpose is, of course, the ‘mission’ given to the Apostles, to preach and baptize. In the Monza treasury, five “purses of the Apostles” are preserved, noted as early as the inventory of 1042. They may date as early as the fifth century and three have been linked to Palestine, so it is possible they once held relics from the founding donation to Queen Theodelinde from Pope Gregory the Great.²⁵ Although it is likely that the purses were once containers for relics, at some point before 1042 they became relics themselves, through the association with the Apostles.

It is Augustine’s commentary on Luke 10:2 in his Sermon 51 that clarifies the connection between the purse and the benefits of the mission. He writes:

[What does] “Carry no purse (*sacculus*)”, mean? What is a purse? Money shut up, that is, concealed wisdom. What does “Don’t carry [anything] with you” mean? “Receive ye the Holy Ghost”: it should be a fountain in thee, not a purse – one from whence distribution is made to others, not one that holds things in itself.²⁶

Augustine associates the purse both with protection and with disbursement, with money not spent and with money freely given. Ultimately, his metaphorical purse spews forth its contents in imagined torrents of wisdom.

This is the second time that an image associated with a reliquary shape has been associated with the idea of a sign of wisdom disseminated through preaching (the first was, of course, the Cross). It is also the second time that the sign carries two alternative sides as did Paul’s Cross – one for the foolish and one for the wise (in faith).

One more association with the Apostles may be added here, this time from an examination of the imagery on the *Stephansbursa*. On the sides of the reliquary is a series of small stamped images that may be the result of the gold-

²⁵ R. CONTI, *Il Tesoro: Guida alla conoscenza del Tesoro del Duomo di Monza* (Monza, 1983²), pp. 9-11.

²⁶ “...dicat mihi, Intellige quod audis, ‘Nolite portare sacculum?’ Quid est sacculus? Pecunia clausa, id est, occulta sapientia. Quid est, ‘Nolite portare vosmetipsos?’ ‘Accipite Spiritum sanctum’. Fons in te debet esse, non sacculus; unde erogatur, non ubi includatur” (Augustinus, *Sermo CI De verbis Evangelii Lucae, Messis quidem multa*, 10. 5. 2-6, ed. in: PL 38, cols. 607-608, tr. adjusted from Augustine, Sermon LI (CI), ed. P. SCHAFF (New York, 1988: *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Series 1*, 6), p. 424. I would like to thank Giselle de Nie for help with this passage.

smith's using pre-existent dies (Fig. 7). Nonetheless, I do not believe the imagery is without meaning. It represents recurring tiny images of a fisherman, hunters, falconers and an angel accompanied by the inscription *MALIS VINDICTA*. The last may be a warning to keep hands off, but the others are likely to be references to the Apostles and their characterization as "fishers of men". Surely the purses assist in this figurative hunt, the mission of conversion?

Following a primary association with the Apostles, the purses additionally became linked with their successors, the bishops, not only as reliquaries to carry and sanctify their own persons, as suggested by the Braga text, but also in a metaphorical sense. Some bishop saints were associated, even identified with the attribute of the money purse. Nicholas, who was renowned for his great charity, gave purses away. More importantly, as part of their duties bishops were responsible for the finances of their bishoprics – controlling the purse strings. In contrast, however, to the control of funds and property, the reliquary purse reinforces the bishop's role in spreading the wealth of Christian wisdom, disseminated through sermons and liturgical performances. At least one such reliquary purse seems to have been buried with a bishop.²⁷

Perhaps more commonly, however, the costly reliquaries were not in any sense owned by bishops. Instead they were part of the Church treasury and, in their liturgical use, were associated with the memory of as many as three sorts of donors. As in the case of the Teuderic purse, noble donors supplied the money, ecclesiastical donors supplied church approval and oversight, and artistic makers offered their labour and imagination. Although the purses as a group do not generally preserve inscriptions, Pippin Micheli has shown a triadic structure like that on the Teuderic relic was the norm in inscriptions on early medieval Irish reliquaries.²⁸ Anglo-Saxon documents similarly commonly record donor as well as ecclesiastical patron.²⁹ If this is the usual structure of donation, one must imagine that the purses might be used "on feast days" by bishops while simultaneously, as part of the treasury, attesting to the prestige of a more comprehensively represented Church.

One last example clarifies the persistence of such associations. The treasury of Emmerich preserves a twelfth-century purse-shaped reliquary that is linked

²⁷ A later addition to Symeon of Durham's early twelfth-century history of the church at Durham mentions the exhumation of the eighth-century bishop Acca. A small object made of two wooden boards held together by silver nails, a construction reminiscent of the Enger purse reliquary, was found. Those responsible looked for relics but were not sure whether they had been present. HINTON *et al.*, "The Winchester reliquary", p. 63.

²⁸ P.E. MICHELI, "The inscriptions on pre-Norman Irish reliquaries", *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* 96 (1996), pp. 1-48.

²⁹ C.R. DODWELL, *Anglo-Saxon Art: A New Perspective* (Manchester, 1982), p. 200.

to bishop Willibrord. Saint Willibrord was a Northumbrian missionary, ordained by Pope Sergius in Rome in 692 and sent north with a bundle of relics to convert the pagans.³⁰ The purse reliquary speaks directly to his original mission – carrying relics and converting – and attests to his importance as a saint. In other words, this twelfth-century reliquary in effect ‘quotes’ the archaic purse reliquary form to make a point of the bishop’s identification with such an object. In a later reworking that allowed display on an altar or in the treasury, the quotation becomes garbled when the original shape and function of the purse reliquary is distorted through the addition of an architectural base and a crucifixion group.

In sum, the early medieval reliquary purse was redolent with possible meanings. It carried the metaphorical association of relic to treasure in heaven. It could be associated with the purse that supported the travels of the apostolic mission. It could be the purse that carried wisdom, dispensed through preaching. It could also be the purse that represented the bishop’s care for his people. As these meanings and associations have multiplied, it will be useful at this point to pause and explore more fully the way in which metaphor supports such a proliferation of meaning.

Early medieval rhetoricians did not like the term “metaphor” nearly so well as do modern commentators. They tended to define the term merely as a shortened simile without like or as.³¹ Unfortunately, no other term comes to the fore to describe the fluid and continuing production of meaning we have explored. Then as now, various words might be used: sign, symbol and allegory all could be defined to carry these sorts of meaning and each has its proponents in modern discussions.³² Literary, linguistic, and philosophical discussions of metaphor, however, suggest a particularly supple and multi-dimensional model for envisioning the way in which thought is expressed in figurative language.

Roman Jakobson opposed metaphor to metonymy as essential operations of the creation of linguistic and other meaning. He associated metaphor with

³⁰ VAN OS, *The Way to Heaven*, p. 71.

³¹ See above, n. 4.

³² For symbols, see: D. SPERBER, *Rethinking Symbolism* (Cambridge, 1974). The medieval perspective is described by G.B. LADNER, “Medieval and modern understanding of symbolism: A comparison”, *Speculum* 54 (1979), pp. 223–256. Ladner emphasizes the overlap between symbol and sign (or gr. *semeion*, lat. *signum*), particularly in the work of Augustine (p. 225). The work of post-structuralist philosophers such as Jacques Derrida uses terminology associated with semiotics, i.e. the operation of the sign. LANGER, *Feeling and Form*, uses ‘symbol’ when discussing art. Later medieval thinkers who develop the terminologies of the multiple meanings of scripture (literal, allegorical, anagogical and tropological) represent a very precise thinking on these subjects (as e.g. Aquinas in the *Summa Theologica*).

allusive poetry and metonymy with descriptive prose.³³ Max Black praised literary critics for not assuming “metaphor is incompatible with serious thought”, and argued for an “interaction” model of metaphor in which *both* “subjects ... are systems of things”.³⁴ Following Black’s lead, Paul Ricoeur denied any lexical meaning for metaphor and looked for significance in context. He noted that metaphors carry a double sense of the cognitive and the affective, and that they effect a fusion of the “sense and the senses”. When confronted with what Ricoeur calls a *living* metaphor, the listener is required to work out what is literal and what is figurative. Language is thus changed from “looked through” to “looked at”. Ricoeur concluded that the theory of metaphor is not one of substitution – one thing standing for another – but a theory of tension – one thing standing in relation to another and calling for interpretation.³⁵

What can these insights about the richness and referentiality of linguistic metaphors tell us about visual metaphors in the form of shaped reliquaries? First, we can locate these reliquary metaphors in Jakobson’s opposition of metaphor and metonymy and note that metaphor aligns with what Jakobson (through Saussure) calls the *in absentia* of substitution or selection, and metonymy aligns with the *in praesentia* of contiguity or combination.³⁶ Surely many reliquaries have an essential quality of metonymy but in arguing primarily for their presentation as metaphors, I de-emphasize the common conception of the reliquary as representative of an essential and clarifying *presence*. I would contend, instead, that the reliquaries themselves work against the power of a particular presence. As is typical of many early medieval Western reliquaries, they obscure rather than clarify the presence of the relic and relentlessly point elsewhere to indicate primary loci of meaning.

Black and Ricoeur’s understanding of the working of metaphor encourage us to allow the associations we have found to co-exist and multiply rather than to feel obliged to order them into a program, an allegory or a dogmatic representation of theology. These theories of metaphor have shown us how reliquaries can simultaneously be both here and in heaven, both containers and not-containers, both accessible but surely shut tight. In their role as apostolic signs carried by the representatives of mission and church, they dispense wisdom, healing, miracles, and grace while at the same time never dispensing any *thing* at all. While their metaphorical quality insists that we look “through”

³³ R. JAKOBSON, “Two aspects of language and two types of aphasic disturbances”, in: *On Language*, ed. L.R. WAUGH and M. MONVILLE-BURSTON (Cambridge MA, 1995), pp. 115-134.

³⁴ BLACK, *Models and Metaphors*, pp. 25, 44.

³⁵ RICOEUR, *La métaphore vive*, pp. 239-245, 265.

³⁶ JAKOBSON, “Two aspects of language”, p. 119.

them, as Ricoeur insists it also requires that we “look at” them, and in that looking our senses are engaged. The senses here are not, as one might think, bedazzled by the jewels and thereby distracted by their glittering earthly presence, but as I argue elsewhere in a study on the materials of reliquaries, such “looking” is also a rewarding experience. It participates in an understanding of clustered gems as having the capability of lifting the mind to higher things; an idea familiar to every medievalist from the writings of Abbot Suger, but one which entered medieval thought from antique sources.³⁷ At the same moment that we are entranced by the gems, we thus get a glimpse of the central metaphorical suggestion of the purse, that is, “treasure in heaven”. Rather than limited to a linguistic translation, this metaphor finds room to expand in its pictorial realization. The ideas and associations, affective, intellectual, sensual, and even verbal “say one thing and mean another” but therefore allow access to the divine through the work of “*dissimiles similitudines*”.³⁸

Not surprisingly, the Carolingians produced a large number of purse reliquaries. In their concern with the avoidance of idols, a fear one could ally with the threat of perceived *praesentia* in man-made objects, their reliquaries use the metaphorical in alliance with rigorously articulated allegorical programs to push the mind heavenward. At Charlemagne’s court, Einhard was patron of one example – a now lost Cross base shaped as a silver triumphal arch covered with images of Christian soldiers and evangelists – that elegantly expressed the nature of the Cross reliquary in both senses.³⁹ The figural ornamentation supported an iconographic program while the shape itself celebrates a metaphor linking the Cross to “eternal victory”.

However, it is another lost reliquary, known this time only through texts from the monastery of Fulda, that really captures the careful thinking of the

³⁷ Abbot Suger, *On the Abbey Church of St. Denis and its Art Treasures*, ed. E. PANOFSKY (Princeton, 1979), pp. 62–65.

³⁸ Ancient grammatical sources typically define the metaphor as a figure that says one thing and means another, as Max Black notes (BLACK, “More about metaphor”, p. 21). The so-called Pseudo-Dionysius wrote: “likenesses without resemblance are more apt to elevate our souls” (Pseudo-Dionysius, *De Caelesti Hierarchia* 2 (Eriugena’s Latin version), ed. in: *Dionysiaca*, ed. P. CHEVALLIER, 2 vols. (Bruges, 1937–1949), 2, cols. 742 ff; cited and tr. by J. GAGE, “Gothic glass: Two aspects of a Dionysian aesthetic”, *Art History* 5 (1982), pp. 36–58, at p. 41.

³⁹ H. BELTING, *Das Einhardkreuz: Vorträge und Studien der Münsteraner Diskussion zum arcus Einhardi* (Göttingen, 1974).

Carolingians on the shaping and meaning of reliquaries. In turning to this material, we contrast the purse reliquaries that are preserved with virtually no documentation or history, to lost reliquaries that are attested by a relatively full record of historical circumstances and cultural context. We also turn from a metaphor that as an image is striking in its strangeness, to a metaphor that initially seems to represent the much clearer conventions of the symbol.

As David Appleby writes of their grandiose aspirations: "Fulda's ... reliquaries linked the ninth-century monastery with the Church's historical past and the eschatological future of the celestial Jerusalem. ... [they] expressed a belief in the integrity of salvation history and the place of the monastic community within it".⁴⁰ The Fulda reliquaries are described in a text that lingers on a story of their origin. Rudolf, a monk of Fulda, tells the history of multiple relics acquired from Rome, their translation, and their deposition in altars. Rudolf also records the metrical inscriptions written by Hrabanus Maurus, the abbot and future bishop, for the six reliquaries. The inscriptions present a very active and personal notion of the saints. They were sent by *Roma* herself, and, after their lives of labour and suffering, the saints "pause" in their reliquaries, ready to work as patrons for those who pray to them.⁴¹

One reliquary in particular, an *arca*, shaped to recall the Ark of the Covenant, reveals Hrabanus' thinking in a remarkably precise fashion. Hrabanus made it for the eastern apse of the church of St. Boniface in 835 and deposited in it the relics of seven saints. In 836, he added the relics of eight others. As the tenth-century *Gesta Abbatum* specifies, like its biblical prototype, the ark had a wooden core covered in gold complete with cherubim, rings, and handles. Indeed, Hrabanus had it carried by its rings in a procession "of Palms".⁴² In Christian commentary on the Old Testament, the Ark stands for the Church. "Under the old covenant, [the Ark] contained the laws and relics of the Hebrew past; under the new covenant, it still reflects the divine plan but now contains evidence of the new dispensation, namely grace".⁴³ As the Ark was placed in

⁴⁰ Here and throughout this discussion, I refer to the excellent article of D. APPLEBY, "Rudolf, abbot Hrabanus and the ark of the covenant reliquary", *American Benedictine Review* 46 (1995), pp. 419-443, at p. 421.

⁴¹ APPLEBY, "Rudolf", pp. 431-432.

⁴² "*Fecit arcam instar arcae Mosaicae cum circulis et vectibus ex omni parte auratam, propitiatorium, cherubim gloriae, candelabrum ductile ex toto auratum. Hic constituit processionem iocundissimam in palmis fieri ipsamque arcam cum predicto decore et magna gloria deferri...*" (J. VON SCHLOSSER, *Schriftquellen zur Geschichte der Karolingischen Kunst* (Vienna, 1892: *Quellenschriften für Kunstgeschichte und Kunsttechnik des Mittelalters und der Neuzeit* 4), p. 122, No. 390).

⁴³ APPLEBY, "Rudolf", p. 436.

the Holy of Holies during sacrifice in Jerusalem, so relics under the altar, evoked the spiritual reality of a New Jerusalem.

In order to understand what Hrabanus' reliquary may have looked like, we can consider a mosaic in St Germigny des Prés (Fig. 8, here an 1847 drawing). In the conch of the apse, in a much-restored mosaic, two angels display the Ark of the Covenant while below a river, the Jordan, flows along the circumference of the apse (not so clear in the nineteenth-century restoration of the mosaic but visible in this drawing). The real subject of the image lies not in any of its individual visual details but in an absence – the empty interior of the ark. The sacred object has been emptied of the “relics of the Hebrew past” and now stands only for the treasure of grace, figured by the Jordan flowing below. In other words, although it appears to be an image of an object or objects, the creator of the mosaic has depicted a void – a numinous void, but a void nonetheless – the ultimate *absentia*. The cloth lining of the coffin that signifies absence, like Christ's shroud in the sepulchre, is just barely visible in the mosaic, but the line drawing made before the restoration clearly shows the back of the empty box and the cloth.

Although Paul Meyvaert and Ann Freeman have attempted to define the precise meanings of each part of the image at Germigny des Prés, they are forced to admit that “it is difficult ... to identify beyond doubt the particular symbolic readings uppermost in Theodulf's mind when he created his image”.⁴⁴ I suggest that this is so because rather than a fixed and conventional sign or theological allegory, like the reliquaries we have investigated, this image works as a multivalent metaphor. The inscription emphatically invites one to look at an image that “shimmers”, that is close to incorporeal, and then to pray:

As you gaze upon this inner sanctuary with the Cherubim, beholder,
And see the shimmering of the Ark of God's covenant,
Perceiving these things, and prepared to beset [God] with prayers,
Add, I beg you, Theodulf's name to your invocations.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ A. FREEMAN and P. MEYVAERT, “The meaning of Theodulf's apse mosaic at Germigny-des-Prés”, *Gesta* 40 (2001), pp. 125-139, at p. 129.

⁴⁵ “ORACLUM SCM ET CHERUBIN HIC ASPICE SPECTANS ET TESTAMENTI EN MICAT ARCA DEI / HAEC CERNENS PRECIBUSQUE STUDENS PULSARE TONANTEM THEODULFUM VOTIS IUNGITO QUAESO TUIS”. I choose Freeman and Meyvaert's second option for the translation of the first line and replace “the Thunderer” with “God” (text and translation from FREEMAN and MEYVAERT, “The meaning of Theodulf's apse mosaic”, p. 125.

In addition to the gold of the mosaic, the hand of God authorizes not the Ark itself but the "covenant".⁴⁶ As Theodulf notes in his meditations upon this image, the two smaller cherubim symbolize angelic mission and their outspread outer wings show that they are open and "consider the faithful of both peoples, Jews and Gentiles, to be possessors with themselves of the heavenly court",⁴⁷ in some sense inviting both peoples to the revealed sanctuary. The larger Cherubim, in full colour, represent, as Theodulf tells us, those added by Solomon and were "to indicate that the Church after the Lord's incarnation was to be increased by the fellowship of different peoples".⁴⁸ This must be an invitation to such people as the Franks in their further mission to Christianize northern Europe.

The apse image, finally, begins to work as a ladder of mental ascent focussed through the devotee's attention to a (represented) physical object. Below the mosaic is the altar upon which the sacrament of the Eucharist is celebrated, above, in the apse, is a vision of heaven. At the lowermost point of the vision is the river Jordan which recalls the baptismal entry into Christian mysteries.⁴⁹ The large angels emerge as present in the pictorial space, in full colour and overlapping the borders, inviting the viewer in with open palms and pointing to the Ark. The smaller cherubim, the statues that ornamented the Ark, gesture inward with both arms, and the void within the Ark shimmers, the focus of all eyes. Although in the *Opus Caroli regis*, Theodulf argued for a very limited use of art and imagery, here he has given us a thoroughgoing visual explication of the propriety and process of the viewing of sacred objects. One gazes, prays, and moves beyond.

The Fulda Ark carries these meanings and more. Hrabanus was not so adamantly opposed to images as Theodulf and saw the benefits of three-dimensional objects as well as their use in liturgical spectacles. He filled his

⁴⁶ This is, I believe, the hand of God with the palm indicated with a line of differently coloured *tesserae* as is done with the hands of the angels, not the hand of Christ with a wound as Meyvaert and Freeman suggest (FREEMAN and MEYVAERT, "The meaning of Theodulf's apse mosaic", p. 133).

⁴⁷ The entire passage reads: "*Duos autem eque parietes suis tangunt alis, quia fideles utriusque populi, Iudaeorum scilicet et gentium, conpotes secum habent aulae caelestis*" (Theodulf of Orléans, *Opus Caroli Regis contra Synodum (Libri Carolini)*, ed. A. FREEMAN (Hannover, 1998: *MGH CONC 2, Supplementum 1*), p. 199, ll. 11-15, cited by FREEMAN and MEYVAERT, "The meaning of Theodulf's apse mosaic", p. 129).

⁴⁸ "*quod post incarnationem Dominicam ecclesia latius esset ex diversarum gentium congregatione sublimanda*" (Theodulf of Orléans, *Opus Caroli Regis contra Synodum (Libri Carolini)*, ed. A. FREEMAN (Hannover, 1998: *MGH CONC 2, Supplementum 1*), p. 198, ll. 19-22, cited by FREEMAN and MEYVAERT, "The meaning of Theodulf's apse mosaic", p. 129).

⁴⁹ FREEMAN and MEYVAERT, "The meaning of Theodulf's apse mosaic", pp. 131-132.

reliquaries with such a crowd of saints that individual presence is erased in favour of an image of the heavenly court. At the same time that Hrabanus' Ark is a specific shape that is carefully described in the Old Testament and probably much like that represented in the Theodulf mosaic, metaphor and its "tensions" comes into play when we imagine its contents. Even while it is full, it is also in some sense always *emptied*, voided of its original contents in a message about the grace of the New Covenant. Furthermore, as at Germigny des Prés, and, as for the purse and the Cross, this grace can serve as an unending font of wisdom.

As a group, reliquaries that assume shapes suggested by metaphor make rich associations with important and significant objects in this world and deliver complex sets of associations that refuse to be confined to glittering surfaces or mysterious interiors. The metaphors are consistently chosen from Gospel and biblical sources and respond to the need to preach the faith and carry the message to the faithful, doing important missionary work. In assuming their metaphorical shaping, these objects paradoxically are able to deny their physicality and insistently point beyond themselves and this world. They promise but also frustrate expectations associated with their apparent shape. The medicine is not to be taken; the purse will not release its content but signifies treasure in heaven; the ark is the holiest of containers – prescribed by God himself – but is resolutely emptied of its contents; later medieval arm reliquaries point not to their purported saintly and enclosed body but to heaven;⁵⁰ and heads are not the locus of meaning or identity but only a transmitter that passes on the prayer.⁵¹ Finally, if these shaped reliquaries are "speaking reliquaries", they speak not a simple report of their contents but converse in a complexly suggestive and metaphorical speech that charms their audience with the charisma of a gifted rhetorician while leading minds to higher things.

⁵⁰ C. HAHN, "The voices of the saints: Speaking reliquaries", *Gesta* 36 (1997), pp. 20-31.

⁵¹ See my forthcoming book: *Medieval Reliquaries: Origins and Issues*.



Fig. 1 Washington D.C., Dumbarton Oaks. Ivory medicine box, sixth century.
Lid. Personification of Hygieia.



Fig. 2 Washington D.C., Dumbarton Oaks. Ivory medicine box, sixth century.
Interior view.

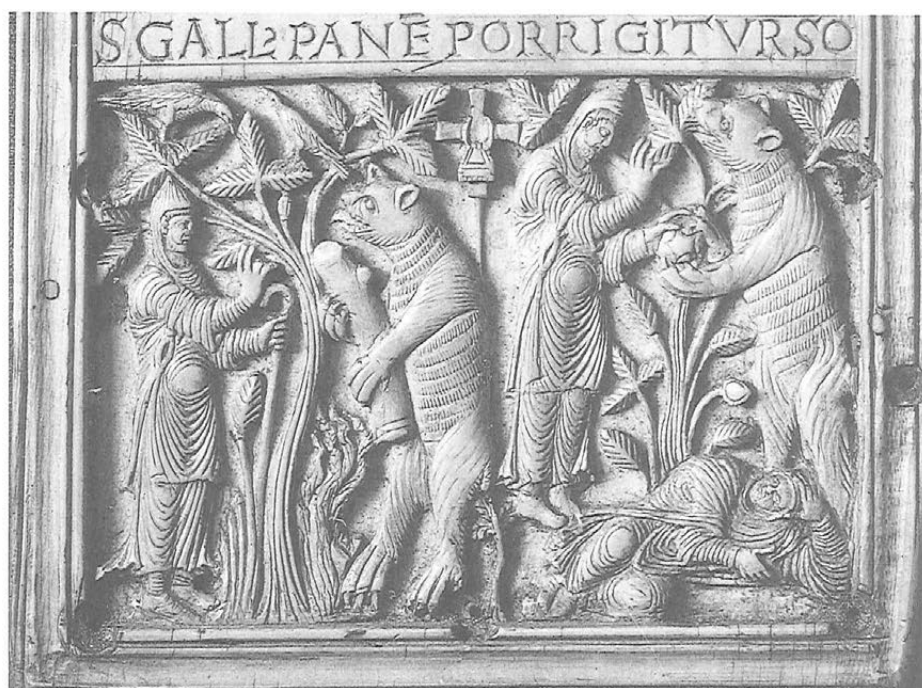


Fig. 3 St. Gall, Stiftsbibliothek. Ivory book cover by Tuotilo. c. 900. detail: St. Gall protects the future site of the monastery by erecting a cross with relics.

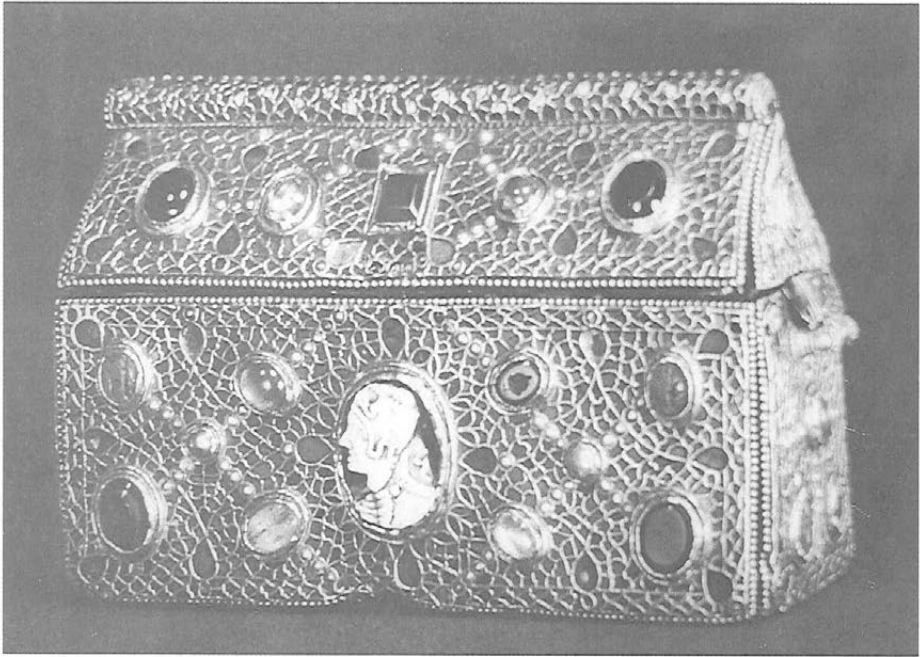


Fig. 4 Agaune, Saint-Maurice. Teuderic purse, seventh century. Gemmed front.

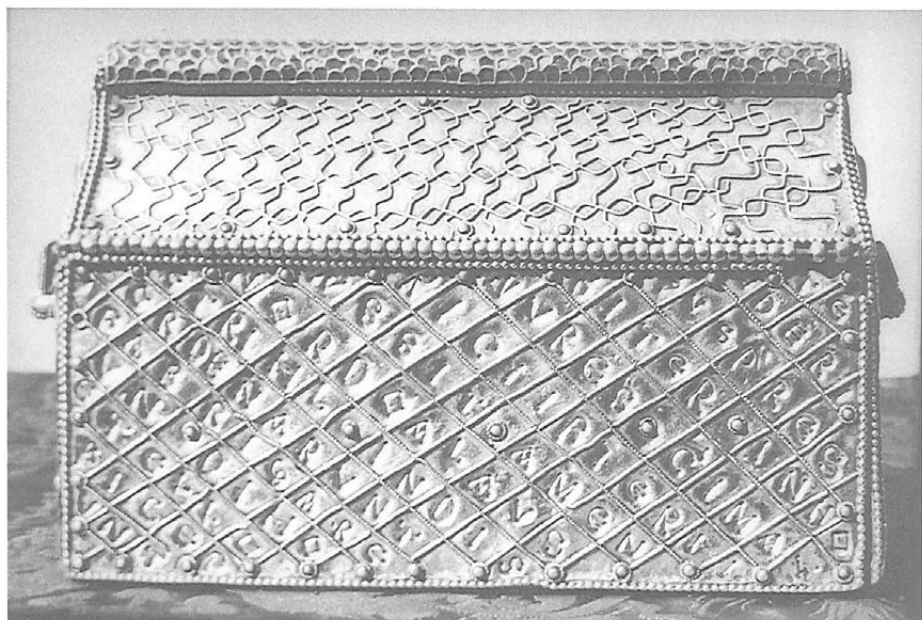


Fig. 5 Agaune, Saint-Maurice. Teuderic purse, seventh century. Inscription on back.

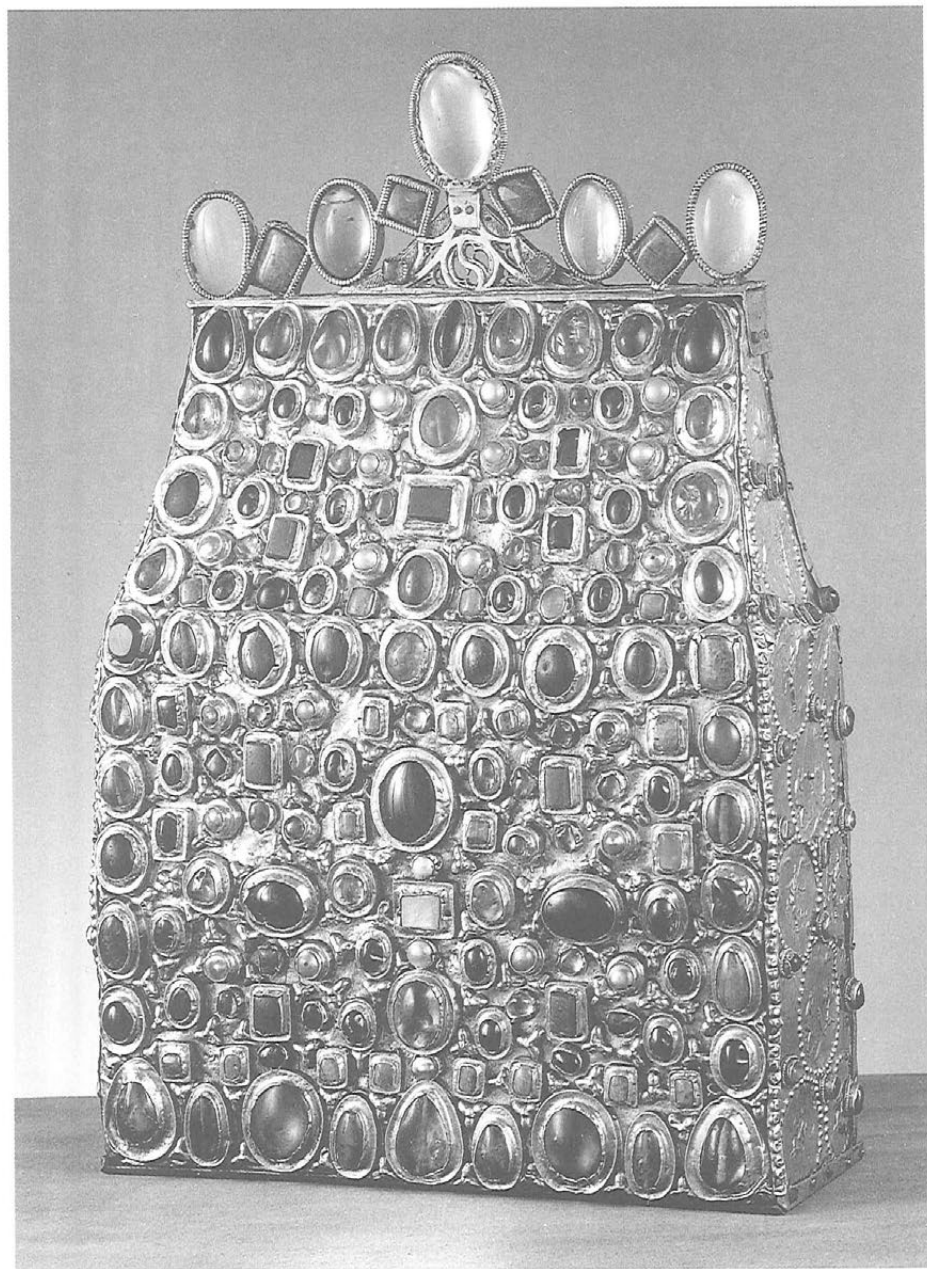


Fig. 6 Wien, Kunsthistorisches Museum. *Stefansbursa*, early ninth century. Gemmed front.



Fig. 7 Wien, Kunsthistorisches Museum. *Stefansbursa*, early ninth century. Side, with stamped ornament.

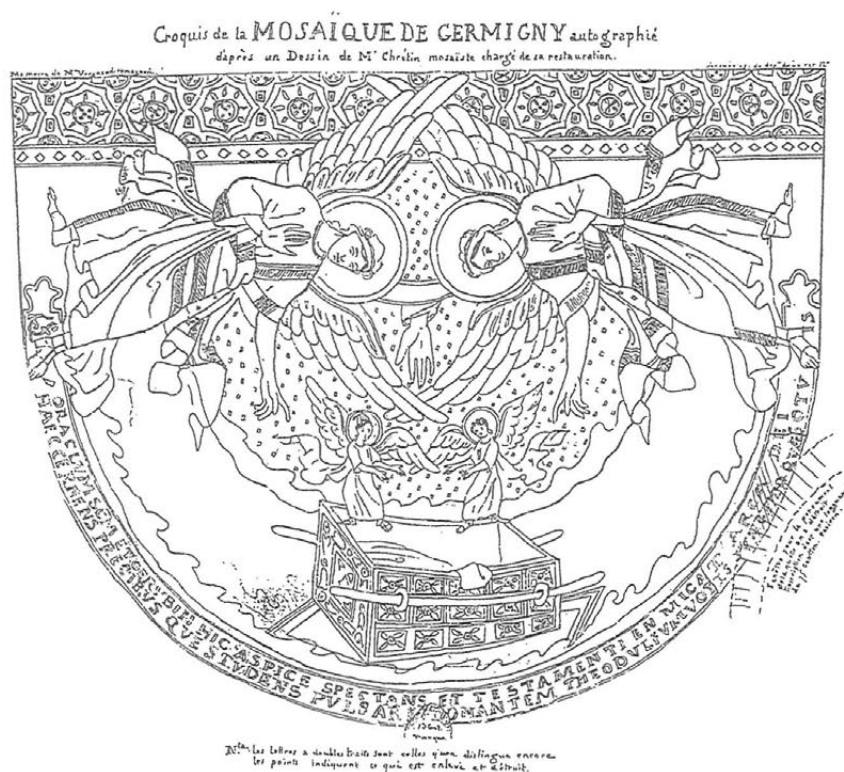


Fig. 8 Germigny des Prés. Drawing of apse mosaic by Théodore Chrétin before its restoration, 1847 (After Vergnaud-Romagnesi).

Materializing the Invisible in Early Medieval Art: The Mosaic of Santa Maria in Domnica in Rome

ERIK THUNØ

After decades of very little scholarly attention the mosaic of S. Maria in Domnica on the Celian hill in Rome has recently been the subject of several individual studies. A variety of topics has thereby been addressed such as the style of the mosaic, this technique and iconography to end up with considerations of its ample inscription, its relationship to the imagery, the mosaic's impression upon the ninth-century viewer and, of course, its historical context and significance within Paschal I's pontificate (817-824) and the early medieval imagery of Rome.¹ Rather than exhausting the possibilities for further studies on this monument, the complementary character of these approaches opens up new questions which hopefully will continue to enrich our understanding of this splendidly preserved visual testimony from ninth-century Rome. This article builds on the recent results but goes a step further to consider a hitherto ignored, but central feature of this mosaic, namely the very materiality of the imagery in S. Maria in Domnica and how it inflects the icono-

¹ R. WISSKIRCHEN, "Santa Maria in Domnica: Überlegungen zur frühesten apsidalen Darstellung der thronenden Maria in Rom", *Aachener Kunstblätter* 61 (1995-1997), pp. 381-393; E. THUNØ, "Decus suus splendet ceu Phoebus in orbe: Zum Verhältnis von Text und Bild in der Apsis von Santa Maria in Domnica in Rom", in: *Die Sichtbarkeit des Unsichtbaren: Zur Korrelation von Text und Bild im Wirkungskreis der Bibel*, ed. B. JANOWSKI and N. ZCHOMELIDSE (Stuttgart, 2003), pp. 147-165; C. RANUCCI, "Il mosaico absidale: Note sulle vicende conservative e fortuna critica", in: *Caelius I. Santa Maria in Domnica, San Tommaso in Formis e il Clivus Scauri*, ed. A. ENGLER (Roma, 2003), pp. 228-241; F. SVIZZERETTO, "Il mosaico absidale manifesto iconodulo: Proposta di interpretazione", *ibid.*, pp. 241-256. The articles contain full references to previous scholarship on the mosaics.

graphy in ways that serve the mosaic's historical context and Paschal's role as a patron.

The centre of the apse conch of the church is occupied by the monumental enthroned figure of the Virgin and Child surrounded by choirs of angels (Figs. 1-2). Mary extends her right palm down towards the proportionately smaller, kneeling figure of the mosaic's patron Pope Paschal. The ninth-century pontiff holds the Virgin's extended right foot in both hands, while his own feet extend downward over the lower border of the mosaic decoration (Fig. 3). The kneeling pope occupies the lowest stratum of a vertical, hierarchical composition that culminates above with the figure of Christ, flanked by two angels and the twelve Apostles. No longer an infant on his mother's lap, Christ reappears as the resurrected Saviour in Heaven seated within an oval mandorla of divine light, a device that separates him from the material world (Fig. 4). Monumentally scaled figures of John the Baptist and John the Evangelist, both pointing with their right arms in the direction of Christ, occupy the spandrels of the apse arch.

The mosaic points to Christ as two natures in one person, divine as his Father in Heaven was, and human as was his mother on earth. Several formal features of the mosaic, however, allow us to determine the context of this Christological message with greater precision; upon entering the church, the viewer is first met by an incredibly large and dominating figure of the Virgin in contrast to the comparatively small image of Christ in the mandorla on the apex of the arch, even though he is placed in the very top of the hierarchy. In fact, it is the apse conch that first attracts our attention, where the central, monumental seated figure of the Virgin robed in dark blue and set off by the golden yellow of the surrounding throne seems, supported by the curvature of the apse conch, to lean forwards so that she fills the church space. Thus she appears as almost as tangible to the viewer as she is for Pope Paschal within the fictive image. Representing the Child on her lap, the mosaic emphasizes her role as Mother of God, through whose flesh God appeared in the flesh, turning the apse conch into an intermediary zone between the terrestrial world in the church and Christ in the mandorla. The juxtaposition of these two dimensions in the apse is further accentuated by the tall, pale angels, lightly poised, immaterial beings who, in their flatness denote the impalpable quality of the heavenly realm, whereas the Virgin and Child are fashioned three-dimensionally and shown settled coherently on a substantial throne. The presence of the angels helps define, by contrast, the human nature of both the Virgin and Child. With his feet on the frame of the mosaic and hands on Mary's foot, the figure of Pope Paschal also signals Mary's connection between humankind, represented by the

pope, and God in Heaven, while making the pope a mediator linking humankind with the Virgin. The peculiar, but pivotal position of the pope shall continue to occupy us throughout this paper.

The conch of S. Maria in Domnica carries a long inscription which reads:

This house had once fallen into ruin. Now it shines forever through the glittering of multicolored stones and its splendour radiates like Phoebus in the heavens who shall vanquish the dark veil of the terrible night. Virgin Mary, it is for you that the honourable ruler Paschal with pleasure has built this house, which shall stand for centuries.²

The importance of this inscription is clearly suggested by its placement directly below the central image, its monumental scale, covering about one third of the apse, and its gold capital letters that flash against a deep blue background. First of all, it tells something about our pope, namely that he commissioned the reconstruction of the church as well as its mosaic, as a gift to the Virgin. Secondly, the inscription reveals something about the intended meaning of the mosaic as artistic medium. The Latin word *metallis*, common in medieval mosaic inscriptions, alludes to both precious metals and stones which the glittering *tesserae*, which make up the mosaic, both consist of and imitate.³ Unlike marble *tesserae*, as for instance used in ancient Roman floor mosaics, the glass *tesserae* in S. Maria in Domnica effectively reflect the light and produce unusually strong colours. To return to the inscription, we are thus told that through its glittering *tesserae*, the mosaic “shines” and “radiates like Phoebus in the heavens”. In Antiquity, Phoebus, meaning pure, clean and bright, was sometimes used to define Apollo as a light-God. The mosaic medium, in other words, serves as a vehicle for expressing the metaphysical idea of divine light or illumination. The Christian notion of light as an embodiment of the divine

² “ISTA DOMUS PRIDEM FUERAT CONFRACTA RUINIS / NUNC RUTILAT IUGITER VARIIS DECORATA METALLIS / ET DECUS SUUS SPLENDET CEU PHOEBUS IN ORBE / QUI POST FURVA FUGANS TETRAE BELAMINA NOCTIS / VIRGO MARIA TIBI PASCHALIS PRAESUL HONESTUS / CONDIDIT HANC AULAM LAETUS PER SAECULA MANENDAM”. For this inscription which is intact, see G.B. DE ROSSI, *Mosaici cristiani e saggi dei pavimenti delle chiese di Roma* (Roma, 1899), p. 226, fig. 1.

³ E. BOROOK, “Rhetoric or reality: Mosaics as expressions of a metaphysical idea”, *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz* 44 (2000), pp. 2-19, at pp. 4-5. As noted by the author, the term *metallis* also appears in the inscriptions of the Roman mosaics of SS. Cosma e Damiano, S. Agnese, S. Prassede and S. Cecilia (the latter two were also commissioned by Paschal I). For these Roman apse inscriptions, see also C. BELTING-IHM, “Zum Verhältnis von Bildprogrammen und Tituli in der Apsisdekoration früher westlicher Kirchenbauten”, in: *Testo e immagine nell’Alto Medioevo*, 2 vols. (Spoleto, 1994: *Atti delle Settimane di Studio del Centro Italiano di Studi sull’Alto Medioevo* 41), 2, pp. 839-885.

goes back to the Bible where Christ had declared himself "the light of the world" (Io 8, 12) who had come to liberate humanity from the darkness of mortality (Mt 4, 16). It therefore lies right at hand to assume that the phrase "Phoebus in the heavens" who vanquishes darkness refers to Christ at the top of the arch, who is indeed shown within a mandorla of divine light.⁴ Since early Christianity, in fact, Christ had been linked with the pagan sun cult in both literature, ritual and visual imagery.⁵

The assumption that the specific materiality of the mosaic, referring to precious metals and stones, serves as a reference to Christ can be extended by Scripture, where Christ himself is compared to a stone and not only to a "corner stone" (Eph 2, 20) and "living stone" (1 Pt 2, 4), but also and above all, to a "precious stone" (1 Pt 2, 6). In general terms, the perception of stones as spiritual, supernatural objects is mainly because, as religious historian Mircea Eliade has put it, "stone *is*. It always remains itself and exists of itself ... in its grandeur, its hardness, its shape and its colour, man is faced with a reality and a force that belong to some world other than the profane world of which he is himself a part".⁶ In the present case, the likening of Christ to the mosaic's "precious stones" functioned to attribute to him the same qualities that as the name Phoebus gave Apollo; that is purity, cleanliness and light as proof of his divinity.

The particular capacity of a precious stone to sparkle and glitter with light could be seen as a material analogy to Christ's two natures, as exemplified by an early medieval text on the carbuncle stone, written by Ambrosius Autpertus, abbot of the powerful monastery S. Vincenzo al Volturno in the second half of the eighth century.⁷ In his commentary on the Book of Revelation, Autpertus wrote:

⁴ Perhaps the golden letters themselves of the inscription were meant to support the allusion to Christ as the divine light as in the case of the Godescalc Gospel Book (MS Paris, BN, n.a.l. 1203) from 781; here, the dedicatory poem (ff. 126v-127r) describes the golden letters with which the Word of God are written as referring to the light filled halls of the reign of God emanating with light. For the dedicatory poem, see the edition in: *Poetae Latini aevi Carolini* (I), ed. E. DÜMLER (Berlin, 1881: MGH PP 1), pp. 94 f. I am grateful to William Diebold for bringing this poem to my attention.

⁵ F.J. DÖLGER, *Sol salutis: Gebet und Gesang im christlichen Altertum* (Münster, 1925); D. JANES, *God and Gold in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 50-51, 143-147.

⁶ M. ELIADE, *Patterns in Comparative Religion* (New York, 1958), pp. 216-238 (citation at p. 216).

⁷ On Ambrosius Autpertus and his influence during Paschal's pontificate, see E. THUNØ, *Image and Relic: Mediating the Sacred in Early Medieval Rome* (Rome, 2002), pp. 28 ff.

Just as coal is inflamed, so, as many say, is this stone (the carbuncle). Who else if not God's mediator, the most human of all humans, Jesus Christ is described by this stone? ... because he appeared pure among humans, similar to our human nature though without any darkness of sin and through the light of his divinity he illuminated the darkness of our mortality.⁸

Autpertus' description of the carbuncle clearly demonstrates that it was the stone's nature of being physical matter on the one hand and immaterial by its own brilliance on the other that made it suitable as an analogy to the Incarnation. This, combined with the fact that in the Bible Christ was compared with a precious stone without any further specifications, and that early medieval exegetes associated Christ with many different of the precious stones mentioned in the Bible, first and foremost the twelve precious stones in the foundations of Heavenly Jerusalem, invites us to look at the mosaic, with its qualities of brilliance and reflection obtained through an infinite variety of different *tesserae*, as one unified material manifestation of Christ's divinity in the flesh, an issue which forms the heart of the apse mosaic's iconographic message. By evoking the immaterial through the material, the mosaic's *tesserae* thus serve as metaphorical expressions of God's Incarnation thus authorizing the Virgin as the Mother of God.

The metaphorical play on light versus darkness to express the mystery of the Incarnation is further played out by the presence of the two Saint Johns (the Baptist and the Evangelist) in the spandrels.⁹ Their presence seems closely connected to John the Evangelist's testimony to Christ as the Word who in the beginning was with God:

⁸ "Sicut enim carbo succensus ... ita et hic lapis a multis facere perhibetur. Quis itaque per hunc, nisi mediator Dei et hominum homo Christus Iesu designatur? ... quia videlicet et iuxta humanitatis nostrae naturam sine ulla peccati obfuscatione mundus inter homines apparuit, et divinitatis suae luce tenebras nostrae mortalitatis inlustravit" (Ambrosius Autpertus, *Expositionis in Apocalypsin libri 1-5*, ed. R. WEBER, *Ambrosius Autpertus, Opera I* (Turnhout, 1975: CCCM 27), pp. 133-134. For the medieval significance of precious stones, see the fundamental works by C. MEIER, *Gemma spiritalis: Methode und Gebrauch der Edelsteinallegorese vom frühen Christentum bis ins 18. Jahrhundert* (München, 1977), pp. 246 ff; G. FRIESS, *Edelsteine im Mittelalter: Wandel und Kontinuität in ihrer Bedeutung durch zwölf Jahrhunderte* (Hildesheim, 1980), pp. 134-138; and G. KORNBLUTH, *Engraved Gems of the Carolingian Empire* (Pennsylvania, 1995).

⁹ The identification of these two figures has always been subject to discussion. For references and diverse opinions see most recently THUNØ, "Decus suus splendet", pp. 155-156; SVIZZERETTO, "Il mosaico absidale", pp. 248-249.

All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being with him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world ... and the Word became flesh and lived among us and we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father's only son, full of grace and truth (Io 1, 3-14).

By reference to this passage, the two Johns would serve as authoritative witnesses to the Word made flesh. Moreover, the relevance to the mosaic of this passage, relating the Incarnation to the moment of Creation, might also be born out by the flowering pastures and the large surfaces of green upon which the two Johns appear in the mosaic. The early medieval significance of the colour green derives from the stones mentioned in the Bible. To most authors, the green colour of precious stones like jasper and emerald is symbolic of something that will not wither, but always remain green and fresh, and therefore solid and stable. The standard interpretation of the colour green is provided by Ambrosius Autpertus. For him, the green stones mentioned in the fourth chapter of The Book of Revelation refer to the green pastures of Paradise and to the eternal life that lies in Christ's divinity.¹⁰ Green is therefore connected with eternity, God, power, and Creation. While this colour of the mosaic can thus be said to support the bearing of the two saint Johns on the rest of the program, vice-versa the two men also underline the mosaic's role as a material metaphor of the Word as the Life and True Light that entered the world to save humanity. Against this background, John the Evangelist's pointing to the Incarnation as a new dispensation also finds a parallel in the inscription's reference to the church as a former ruin, which now rebuilt and with its luminous mosaic, has evicted darkness. By this interaction of inscription and program, the key events in Biblical history – Creation and Incarnation – become closely interwoven with Pope Paschal's artistic patronage as defined through his restoration and decoration of S. Maria in Domnica.

Paschal's interest in artistic media as material metaphors of the Incarnation is underscored by an enamelled cross reliquary he commissioned for his own Roman residence, the Lateran Palace (Fig. 5). The upper side of this gold cross

¹⁰ Ambrosius Autpertus, *Expositionis in Apocalypsim libri X*, ed. in: R. WEBER, *Ambrosius Autpertus, Opera II* (Turnhout, 1975: CCCM 27A), pp. 207-208. See also H. ŠEDINOVÁ, "The symbolism of the precious stones in St. Wenceslas Chapel", *Artibus et historiae* 39 (1999), pp. 75-94, at pp. 83-84 and 87.

(Vatican Museums) presents a group of seven episodes from the Infancy of Christ depicted in colourful cloisonné enamel. The cross is an early example of the revival of the technique of cloisonné enamel, and the somewhat crude execution reveals that the rediscovery of this technique in Rome was still in an experimental phase. One might well wonder what brought about this unusual choice of medium for the Infancy cycle on this precious cross reliquary. Like the *tesserae* with which it shares the use of coloured glass, enamel was not a special carrier of meaning at least as far as the medieval sources are concerned, nor was it subject to interpretation. However, the colours and translucence of the individual pieces of enamel and their uneven and edgy shapes strongly remind us of gems, which were often used for the ornament of early medieval gold cross reliquaries.¹¹ But unlike gems, malleable molten glass could be used to configure a detailed image, and thus the choice of this medium for a narrative cycle such as this one was probably not fortuitous. Although enamel cannot not glow like a gem, its translucence, whereby the light penetrates the glass and suggests immateriality, made it adequate to serve as a concrete analogy of the Word made flesh, which is indeed the subject of the whole pictorial narrative on the cross. In this way, the very material out of which the pictures were made complements and reinforces the incarnational meaning of the narrative, and vice versa.¹²

Affinities between the two Paschalian commissions do not end here. The enamelled cross emphasizes the Virgin's role as the vehicle of the Incarnation as shown by her key-presence in the specially accentuated Nativity scene (Fig. 6). We also learn from the inscription on the sides of the enamelled cross that the latter was a gift from the pope to the Virgin, defined as his "Sovereign" and entitled "Queen of the world".¹³ By accentuating Mary as both Mother of God and Queen of Heaven, the reliquary cross thereby expresses a specific concept of devotion to the Virgin which centres on her role as intercessor for humankind before Christ in Heaven. Carolingian mariologists explained that because

¹¹ D. BUCKTON, "Byzantine enamel and the West", *Byzantinische Forschungen* 13 (1988), pp. 235-244, where the author refers to the similarity of the techniques of setting cloisonné enamel and gems, as described by Theophilus in his twelfth-century treatise *De diversis artibus*, ed. and tr. C.R. DODWELL (London, 1961), pp. 104-105. For the technique and history of enamel see also D. BUCKTON, "Enamelling on gold: A historical perspective", *Gold Bulletin* 15 (1982), pp. 101-109.

¹² THUNØ, *Image and Relic*, pp. 24 ff and 153 ff.

¹³ The inscription runs as follows: "ACCIPE QUAESO A DOMINA MEA REGINA MUNDI HOC VEXILLUM CRUCIS QUOD TIBI PASCHALIS EPISCOPUS OPTULIT"; C.R. MOREY, "The inscription on the enamelled cross of Paschal I", *Art Bulletin* 19 (1937), pp. 595-596; THUNØ, *Image and Relic*, p. 25.

during the Annunciation Mary had humbly agreed to be the instrument of the Incarnation, which was essential to the Salvation of humankind, she had been rewarded by being exalted as Queen of Heaven. Ambrosius Autpertus put it like this:

To humans it should suffice only to admit that she is really the queen of heaven because she has generated the king of angels.¹⁴

From her elevated position in Heaven, Mary was able to intercede on behalf of humankind; to use the metaphors of Autpertus, Mary assumed the function of the "doors to paradise" or the "ladder to heaven".¹⁵ To obtain the Virgin's intercession with her Son, it was necessary to imitate the humility she had once shown by her earthly service in the Incarnation. In an inscription on another of Paschal's reliquaries which has luckily been preserved beneath the high altar of S. Maria Maggiore, we thus read: "Receive O immaculate Virgin, the prayers of your servant Pope Paschal".¹⁶ On the enamelled cross, this devotional concept is played out further by the inclusion of episodes of the Virgin's earthly service, beginning with the Annunciation, where Mary sits as a queen on a gem encrusted golden throne, and culminating in the Nativity. In S. Maria in Domnica, the same concept of devotion is made explicit by the frontal portrayal of the Mother of God; her jewel-studded throne contrasts her heavenly reward as elevated *regina* with her earthly service as instrument of the Incarnation as referred to by showing the Child on her lap. In this way, the image unifies cause with effect, and past and present, singling out the prostrating Pope Paschal as Mary's servant and imitator, aspirant of her intercession with Christ in Heaven.¹⁷

¹⁴ "Sufficere debet tantum notitiae humanae hanc vere fateri reginam coelorum, pro eo quod regem peperit angelorum" (Ambrosius Autpertus, *Sermo de adsumptione sanctae Mariae*, 2, ed. R. Weber, *Ambrosius Autpertus, Opera III* (Turnhout, 1979: CCCM27B), p. 1028); THUNØ, *Image and Relic*, pp. 28-29. For the concept of service to the Virgin, see L. SCHEFFCZYK, *Das Marienheilignis in Frömmigkeit und Lehre der Karolingerzeit* (Leipzig, 1959), pp. 100 ff; R. DESHMANN, "Servants of the Mother of God in Byzantine and medieval art", *Word and Image* 5 (1989), pp. 33-70.

¹⁵ "O vere, inquam, gloriosa Mariae humilitas, quae porta paradisi efficitur, scala caeli constituitur" (Ambrosius Autpertus, *Sermo de adsumptione*, ed. WEBER, p. 1033).

¹⁶ "SUSCIPE INTEME/RATA VIRGO PRECES/FAMULI TUI PASCH. PP"; S. DE BLAAUW, *Cultus et decor: Liturgia e architettura nella Roma tardoantica e medievale*, 2 vols. (Città del Vaticano, 1994), 2, p. 872 (appendix); THUNØ, *Image and Relic*, p. 32.

¹⁷ THUNØ, "Decus suus splendet", pp. 150-154; for visual programmes with a similar devotional outlook preceding or shortly postdating Paschal I's pontificate, see A. VAN DIJK, *The oratory of Pope John VII (705-707) in Old St. Peter's* (PhD diss., Johns Hopkins University,

In the mosaic, as on the enamelled cross, Paschal's desire for the Virgin's intercession is paired with his offering of gifts; as revealed by the inscriptions, Paschal dedicated both the mosaic and cross to the Virgin. In other words, gift-giving through patronage was a way of imitating Mary's earthly service to the realization of the plan of Salvation. Yet, Paschal's imitation of the Virgin was not only a question of patronage in a general sense, but is also subtly expressed through the materials of his two artistic commissions. By showing Mary as agent of the Incarnation on the one hand, and by pointing to Paschal as the promoter of the mosaic on the other, an interesting parallel occurs: in commissioning the enamelled cross and the mosaic whose special materiality metaphorically imitates the Incarnation, the patronage of the ninth-century pope is compared to the Virgin's flesh-making of Christ. On a visual level, it is the Virgin's prominent presence as the Mother of God and Queen of Heaven in both decorative programs which is the axis around which this argument is developed.

As the humble imitator of the Virgin's service, Paschal also authorizes himself as a channel of mediation; hence, just as the Virgin assumed a key role in the scheme of Salvation by giving birth to Christ the mediator, so Paschal assumes a corresponding mediacy in having caused the mosaic to come into physical existence. In other words, just as Christ took flesh to mediate between heaven and earth, so can we expect the mosaic to give expression not only to the fusion of matter with spirit, but also to operate between these two poles. An authoritative papal statement on images from the early Middle Ages elucidates this idea. The statement is to be found in the forged Secundinus letter, attributed to Pope Gregory the Great (590-604), but composed in papal circles by the end of the eighth century in defense of the use of images. Thus, the letter claims the image of Christ to be legitimate because it is able to evoke spiritual love by recalling the invisible:

... You seek with all your heart and intentness Him, whose picture you wish to have before your eyes, so that every day, the corporeal sight renders him visible; thus when you see the picture, you are inflamed in your soul with love for him whose image you wish to see. We do no harm in wishing to show the invisible by means of the visible ... We know that you do not ask for an image of our Saviour to

1995), pp. 44 ff, 126 ff; J. MITCHELL, "The crypt reappraised", in: *San Vincenzo al Volturno 1*, ed. R. HODGES (London, 1993), pp. 75-115. On kneeling servants of the emperor or Christ in Byzantine art, see J.G. DECKERS, "Der erste Diener Christi: Die Proskynese der Kaiser als Schlüsselmotiv der Mosaiken in S. Vitale (Ravenna) und in der Hagia Sophia (Istanbul)", in: *Art, Cérémonial et Liturgie au Moyen Âge*, ed. N. BOCK et al. (Rome, 2002), pp. 11-71.

venerate it as God, but in recalling the Son of God, to rekindle the love of Him whose image you wish to see.¹⁸

The forgery just quoted has been shown to apply Pope Gregory the Great's Christology to its argument in support of images; the clause "... to show the invisible by means of the visible", thus comes remarkably close to the following statement by Gregory on the Incarnation:

He was made flesh in order to make us spiritual, he bowed down with good will to raise us up, he went out to bring us in, he appeared visible to show us the invisible.¹⁹

The purpose of anchoring the eighth-century defense of images in Gregory's own Christological formulations was to provide the former with the authority of the sixth-century Pope and Church Father whose expressions on art had become an important instrument for the defenders of images. In S. Maria in Domnica, the visualization of the invisible is epitomized in the image of Christ on top of the arch which through the mandorla, separating Christ from the material world, asserts the embodiment of the divine in a circumscribed human form.

By underlining Gregory's Christology through a dynamic interaction of iconography and artistic medium, the mosaic could thereby also claim to serve as a bridge between the visible and invisible. To get a better sense of exactly how the mosaic was intended to assume this role, another papal document, a letter Pope Hadrian I wrote to Charlemagne in 791, can prove helpful. Here, in explaining the spiritual power of images, the pope quoted from various texts including Pseudo-Dionysius' *Celestial Hierarchy*:

He (the Father) modelled it on the hierarchies of heaven and clothed these immaterial hierarchies in numerous material figures and forms so that, in a way appropriate to our nature, we might be uplifted from these most venerable images

¹⁸ The forged text appears in Gregory's letter to Secundinus, *Epistola* 9. 148, ed. D. NORBERG, *Gregorius Magnus, Registrum epistolarum*, 2 vols. (Turnhout, 1982: CCSL 140-140A), 2, App. 10, p. 1110; tr. H.L. KESSLER, "Real absence: Early medieval art and the metamorphosis of vision", in: *Morfologie sociali e culturali in Europa fra tarda antichità e alto medioevo*, 2 vols. (Spoleto, 1998: *Atti delle Settimane di Studio del Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo* 45), 2, pp. 1157-1211, at pp. 1176-1177. See also C.M. CHAZELLE, "Memory, instruction, worship", in: *Gregory the Great: A Symposium*, ed. J.C. CAVADINI (Notre Dame and London, 1995), pp. 181-216, at pp. 183 ff.

¹⁹ Gregory the Great, *Homiliae in Hiezechielem prophetam*, ed. M. ADRIAEN (Turnhout, 1971: CCSL 142), p. 272; tr. KESSLER, "Real absence", p. 1178.

to interpretations and assimilations which are simple and inexpressible. For it is quite impossible that we humans should, in any immaterial way, rise up to imitate and to contemplate the heavenly hierarchies without the aid of those material means capable of guiding us as our nature requires.²⁰

In this way, the mosaic with its material forms and figures becomes the vehicle by which the viewer is uplifted to contemplate the invisible. Because Pseudo-Dionysian spirituality thus served as a focal source for the formulation of a theory of images at the Curia, we might take another look at the inscription's indication of the radiant mosaic as an expression of divine light which inevitably recalls Pseudo-Dionysius' concern with how to approach God. In the *Celestial Hierarchy*, Pseudo-Dionysius states that "material lights", such as those which issue from the mosaic, serve as images of the "immaterial gift of light" and as figures by which the viewer can be uplifted to pure contemplation of the invisible.²¹ In attributing the mosaic this anagogical function, Pope Paschal's aspiration to present himself as an imitator of the Virgin becomes even more clear; as patron of the anagogical mosaic, the pope thus authorizes himself as a provider of the sacred in line with the Virgin, who had generated the mediating body of Christ. Paschal's kneeling before the Virgin is therefore not only to be seen as an act of humility and submission, but – as suggested at the beginning of this paper – the positioning of himself between humankind and the Virgin also singles him out as a mediator of the sacred, authorized through his humble devotion to the Virgin.

To summarize the issues dealt with so far: Paschal's service to the Virgin is materialized through the mosaic, his gift to her. In imitating the Incarnation of the Word by virtue of its own materiality the mosaic also assumes the anagogical function of leading the flesh, i.e., humankind, back to the Word. Just as the Logos was made visible through Christ's body, so it is now visualized through the mosaic, and just as Mary was the vehicle through which the body came into being, so Paschal is the instrument to which the mosaic owes its existence.

The issue of providing access to the sacred through the Incarnation first in sacred history through a body, and later through papal patronage of the mosaic

²⁰ Pope Hadrian I, *Epistula* 2, ed. E. DÜMMLER, in: *Epistolae Karolini aevi* (III), ed. E. DÜMMLER et al. (Berlin, 1898-1899: MGH EPP 3), pp. 32-33; Pseudo-Dionysius, *De coelesti hierarchia*, ed. G. HEIL and A.M. RITTER in: *Corpus Dionysiacum*, ed. K. ALAND and E. MÜHLENBERG, 1- (Berlin, 1990-), 2, pp. 8-9; tr. C. LUIBHEID in: *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, ed. P. ROREM (New York, 1987), p. 145.

²¹ Pseudo-Dionysius, *De coelesti hierarchia*, ed. ALAND and MÜHLENBERG, pp. 7-9; tr. LUIBHEID, *Pseudo-Dionysius*, pp. 145-146.

also seems to be touched on in the Domnica inscription and its metaphor on the vanquishing of the veil, allowing light to replace darkness. A Christian interpretation of this metaphor begins with the New Testament which only mentions one veil of any significance, that is the curtain (*velamen*) inside the Tabernacle or its temple replacement that separated the Holy from the Holy of Holies (Ex 26, 31-33) to which only the High Priest had access, and then only once a year.²² In the New Testament, this curtain is said to have been “torn in two, from top to bottom” (Mt 27, 51) at the moment Christ expired on the Cross thereby making the Jewish sanctuary accessible to all. A passage in the Epistle to Hebrews explains (Heb 10, 19-20):

So now my friends, the blood of Jesus makes us free to enter boldly into the sanctuary by the new and living way which he has opened for us through the curtain, the way of his flesh.

In other words, God's coming in the flesh unveiled the hidden mysteries of the Old Testament whereby the sacred was made attainable by all. In S. Maria in Domnica “the dark veil of the terrible night” vanquished by Phoebus/Christ might therefore not only refer to the Incarnation, but also be associated with the issue of the accessibility of the sacred through the mosaic. Interplaying with this idea may indeed be the already forwarded suggestion that the apse image replicates an icon of the Virgin, perhaps the Roman icon *Madonna della Clemenza* which, as Carlo Bertelli has shown, also includes a prostrating pope (Fig. 7).²³

During the iconoclastic controversy, iconodules set the Tabernacle and its curtain in opposition to Christian images, because through his Incarnation and sacrifice, Christ had once and for all annulled all Jewish sacrifices and made the

²² For metric and poetic reasons, the Domnica inscription gives the plural form of *velamen*. The veil as a metaphor of the night (“*velamina noctis*”) seems to derive from the poet Arator's *De actibus Apostolorum*, 2. 1125: “*Lux revocata micat, velamine noctis aperto*” (ed. A.P. MCKINLAY, *Aratoris Subdiaconi De actibus Apostolorum* (Vienna, 1951: CSEL 72), p. 141). This epic, written in Rome, was widely read in the early Middle Ages. I am grateful to Peter Dronke for this reference.

²³ C. BERTELLI, *La Madonna di Santa Maria in Trastevere* (Roma, 1961), 61; M. ANDALORO and S. ROMANO, “L'immagine nell'abside”, in: *Arte e iconografia a Roma dal tardoantico alla fine del medioevo*, ed. M. ANDALORO and S. ROMANO (Milano, 2002), pp. 73-103, at pp. 83 ff. For the most recent dating of this icon, see G. WOLF, “*Alexifarmaka*: Aspetti del culto e della teoria delle immagini a Roma tra Bisanzio e Terra Santa nell'alto medioevo”, in: *Roma fra Oriente e Occidente*, 2 vols. (Spoleto, 2002: *Settimane di studio del Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo* 49), 2: pp. 755-790, at p. 786, who proposes a date between the late sixth and early eighth centuries.

holy visible to all first by means of his own person, and subsequently through the images of him. Unlike sacred objects inside the Jewish sanctuary such as the Ark of the Covenant and its contents (the golden urn of Manna, Aaron's rod and the tablets of the Law), images could do more than just recall history. To iconodules, images served as powerful channels for the veneration of God and therefore superseded the Jewish sanctuary and its *vasa sacra*.²⁴ This conceit finds a precise expression in a full page miniature of the ninth-century Byzantine manuscript of the Christian Topography (MS Vatican, BAV, gr. 699, f. 89r) which was recently studied by Herbert Kessler (Fig. 8); the form of the composition conjures up the Jewish Tabernacle with the Holy of Holies in the upper arched space and the Holy Place in the lower rectangle. Christ alone occupies the upper quadrant, while angels and the earthly inhabitants appear in the lower part. The portrait of Christ has replaced the veil rendered as a golden tapestry, and the inhabitants look up and through Christ into the blue of Heaven behind him. The miniature thus equates the curtain before the Holy of Holies with Christ's flesh and the visual access it provided with Christ's image.²⁵ In S. Maria in Domnica, the mosaic's role as the material expression of Phoebus' vanquishing of the dark veil may thus ultimately point to the mosaic as the replacement of the curtain; in fact, as a reference to the union of matter with spirit, the mosaic itself can be understood as a reference to Christ's flesh, which superseded the curtain and provided access to the invisible.

In support of this argument it is important to remember that not only was the Tabernacle curtain often equated in early medieval exegesis with Christ's flesh, but also that in Rome the associations made between curtain-flesh-image seems already to have found their way into the visual arts. An example is the mosaic in the church of SS. Nereo ed Achilleo near the ancient baths of Caracalla, commissioned by Paschal's immediate predecessor Pope Leo III (795-816) only a few years before Paschal's pontificate (Fig. 9).²⁶ Here, the enthroned Virgin, during the Annunciation, holds a spindle, referring to her spin-

²⁴ H.L. KESSLER, "Through the temple veil: The holy image in Judaism and Christianity", *Kairos* 32-33 (1990-1991), pp. 53 ff.

²⁵ ID., "Gazing at the future: The *Parousia* miniature in Vatican Cod. Gr. 699", in: *Byzantine East, Latin West: Art Historical Studies in Honour of Kurt Weitzmann*, ed. D. MOURIKI et al. (Princeton, 1995), pp. 365-371. On the curtain as Christ's flesh and its display in medieval art and exegesis, see J.K. EBERLEIN, *Apparitio regis – revelatio veritatis: Studien zur Darstellung des Vorhangs in der bildenden Kunst von der Spätantike bis zum Ende des Mittelalters* (Wiesbaden, 1982), p. 86.

²⁶ On this mosaic see DE ROSSI, *Mosaici*, Pl. 22; G. CURZI, "La decorazione musiva della basilica dei SS. Nereo e Achilleo in Roma: Materiali ed ipotesi", *Arte medievale* 2, pt. 7 (1993), pp. 21-45; THUNØ, *Image and Relic*, pp. 129-131, including further references.

ning of the purple wool for the Temple curtain as recorded in the apocryphal infancy gospels; on the opposite side of the arch she appears as the enthroned mother with the Child on her lap. In the Annunciation, the juxtaposition of the act of spinning with the act of conceiving the body of Christ sets up an analogy between the spinning of the wool for the curtain and the building of Christ's flesh.²⁷ When Christ's human nature dies on the cross, this death is expressed using the metaphor of the torn temple curtain. The Annunciation thus opens a parallel to the Crucifixion, as – in fact – alluded to in the former apse mosaic. When the latter was destroyed, its composition was luckily faithfully transmitted through a painting executed shortly after the mosaic was torn down in 1596 (Fig. 10).²⁸ Here, a gemmed Cross is shown before a suspended purple curtain. Divided into two parts by the victorious cross, the curtain must allude to the Temple curtain and thus to the curtain that Mary is shown spinning. The curtain-cross arrangement is visualized as victorious by the gemmed cross because in signifying a new chapter in Salvation history, it also meant the beginning of a new era in which the sacred could be seen and apprehended by all.

The central image of the Transfiguration, where Christ on the mountain was transfigured by the divine light as witnessed on the mountain by the apostles Peter, John and James (Mt 17, 1-9), not only sums up the Christological message of the two adjacent scenes, but as the quintessential Christian Theophany, the Transfiguration proved well-adapted for demonstrating that God had been made visible to mere mortals or, in other words, that the sacred could be perceived in a material form. It is therefore not surprising that during and after Iconoclasm, the image of the Transfiguration became an especially potent argument in favour of sacred images. It may therefore seem even less surprising that the mosaic in SS. Nereo ed Achilleo is recorded to have been completed in 815, the year that Byzantine Iconoclasm broke out for a second time, and that this scene of the Transfiguration is the earliest one surviving in Rome.²⁹ In any case, there can be little doubt that in SS. Nereo ed Achilleo the

²⁷ B.V. PENTCHEVA, "Rhetorical images of the Virgin: The icon of the 'unusual miracle' at the Blachernai", *Res* 38 (2000), pp 34-56, at p. 45. See also N.P. CONSTAS, "Weaving the body of God: Proclus of Constantinople, the Theotokos, and the loom of the flesh", *Journal of early Christian Studies* 3 (1995), pp. 164-194.

²⁸ DE ROSSI, *Musaici*, Pl. 22; S. WAETZOLDT, *Die Kopien des 17. Jahrhunderts nach Mosaiken und Wandmalereien in Rom* (Wien and München, 1964), p. 54, fig. 315; *Carlo Magno a Roma* (exhib. cat.) (Roma, 2001), p. 156 (No. 24); R. KRAUTHEIMER, "A Christian triumph in 1597", in: *Essays Presented to Rudolf Wittkower on his Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, ed. D. FRASER *et al.*, 2 vols. (London, 1967), 2, pp. 174-179.

²⁹ On this aspect of the Transfiguration, see J. ELSNER, "The viewer and the vision: The

materiality of the mosaic evoking the immaterial and the divine light, lends itself particularly well to the Christological significance of the Transfiguration. Mary's spinning of the curtain can therefore not only be seen as an analogy to her flesh-making of Christ, but also to the making of the mosaic itself.

As in S. Maria in Domnica, curtain, flesh and image are thereby inextricably associated in order to evoke the embodiment of the surreal and supernatural in its own material and visible forms, enabling the Logos to be perceived through images. While this argument is epitomized through the mandorla-inscribed figures of Christ on top of the arches in both churches, their conches are singled out as the area where earth and Heaven intersect; in S. Maria in Domnica through the Incarnation, in SS. Nereo ed Achilleo by the allusion to the torn curtain. In showing the Virgin or the Cross, that is, by referring to either the making or the sacrifice of Christ's flesh, both apses point to the era succeeding the curtain in front of the Old Testament Sancta Sanctorum; adorned with mosaics, they provide access to the perception of the invisible through Christ, once in the flesh, now through his image in coloured, glittering glass *tesserae*.

case of the Sinai apse", *Art History* 17 (1994), pp. 81-103; L. BRUBAKER, *Vision and Meaning in Ninth-Century Byzantium: Image as Exegesis in the Homilies of Gregory of Nazianzus* (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 304-307; THUNØ, *Image and Relic*, pp. 131-145, which also considers the historical context and the issue of Iconoclasm.



Fig. 1 Interior of Santa Maria in Domnica, Rome (author)

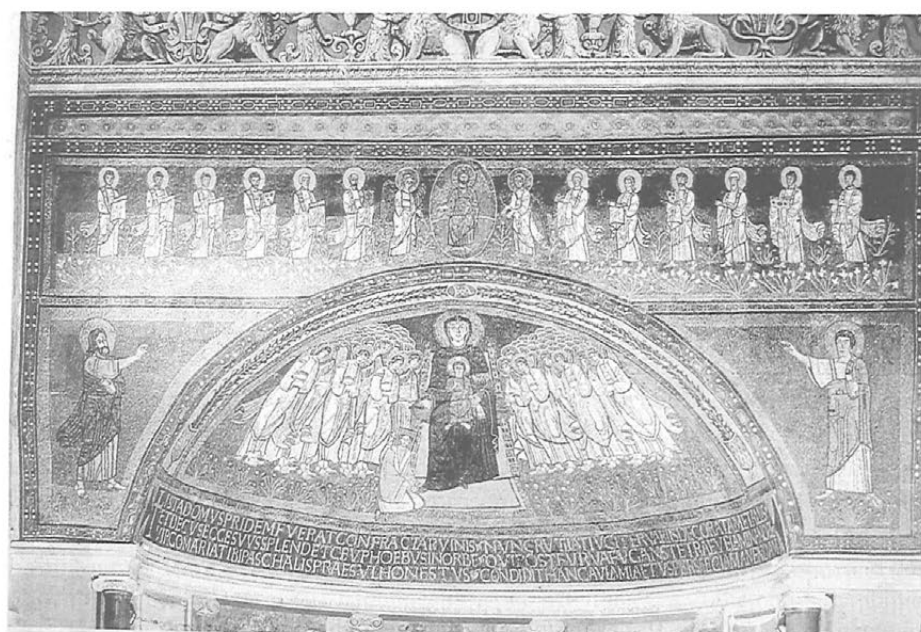


Fig. 2 Mosaic of Santa Maria in Domnica, Rome (Archivio Soprintendenza già Beni Artistici e Storici di Roma, n. 23 D, photo R. Sigismondi, 1999)



Fig. 3 Pope Paschal and the Virgin Mary. Detail of mosaic of Santa Maria in Domnica, Rome (Archivio Soprintendenza già Beni Artistici e Storici di Roma, n. 12 D, photo R. Sigismondi, 1999)

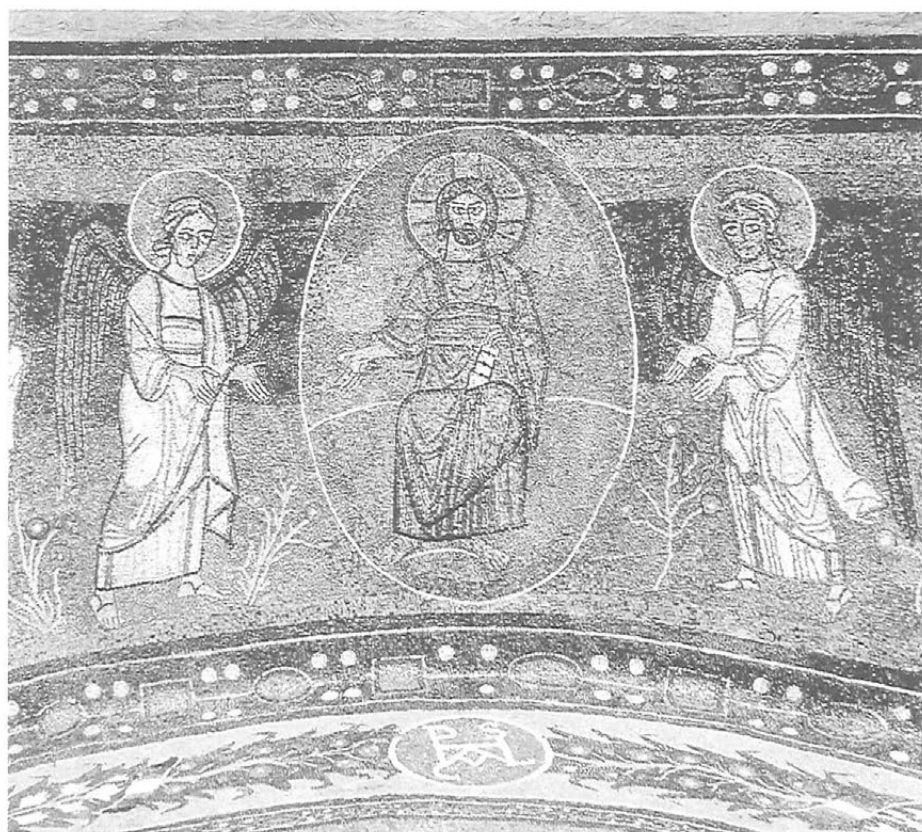


Fig. 4 Christ within oval mandorla. Detail of mosaic of Santa Maria in Domnica, Rome (Archivio Soprintendenza già Beni Artistici e Storici di Roma, n. 20 D, photo R. Sigismondi, 1999)

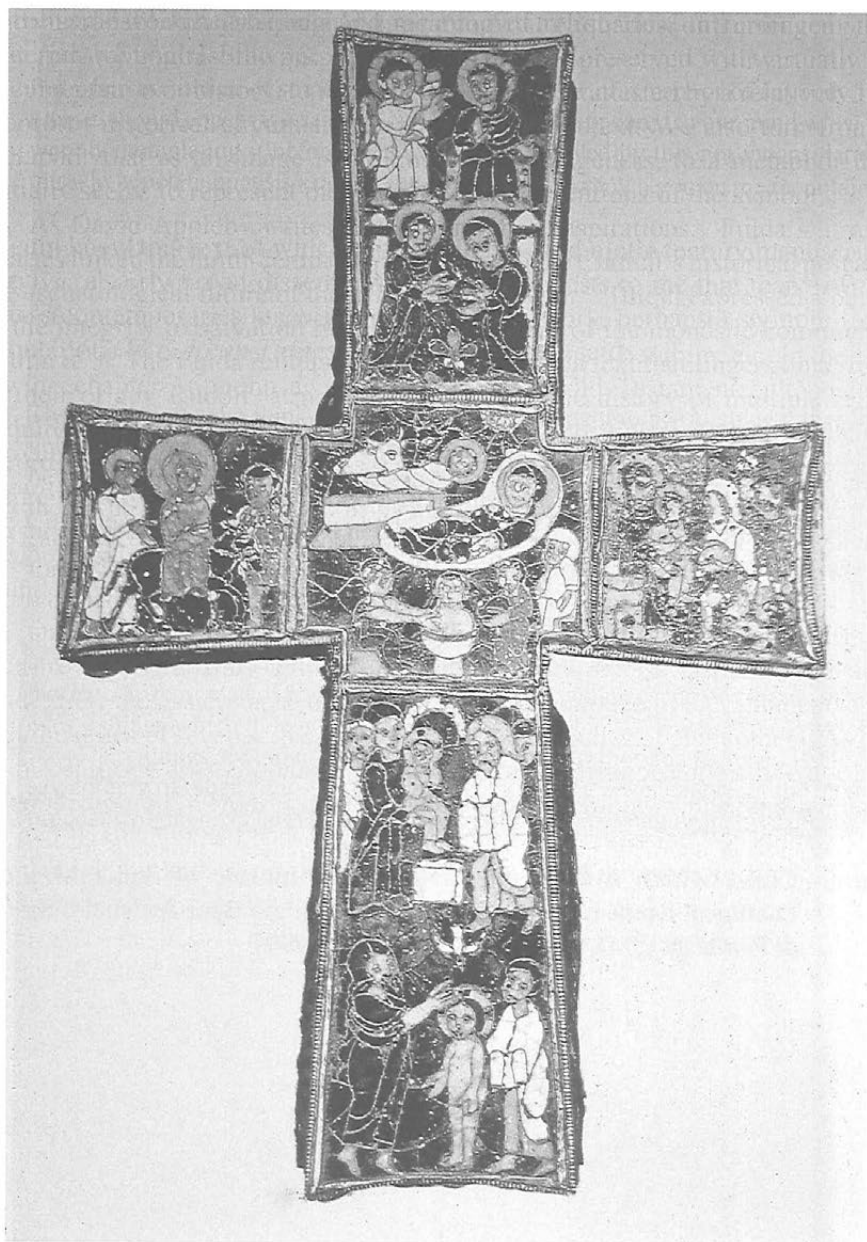


Fig. 5 Enamelled gold cross commissioned by Pope Paschal I, Vatican Museums (David Buckton)

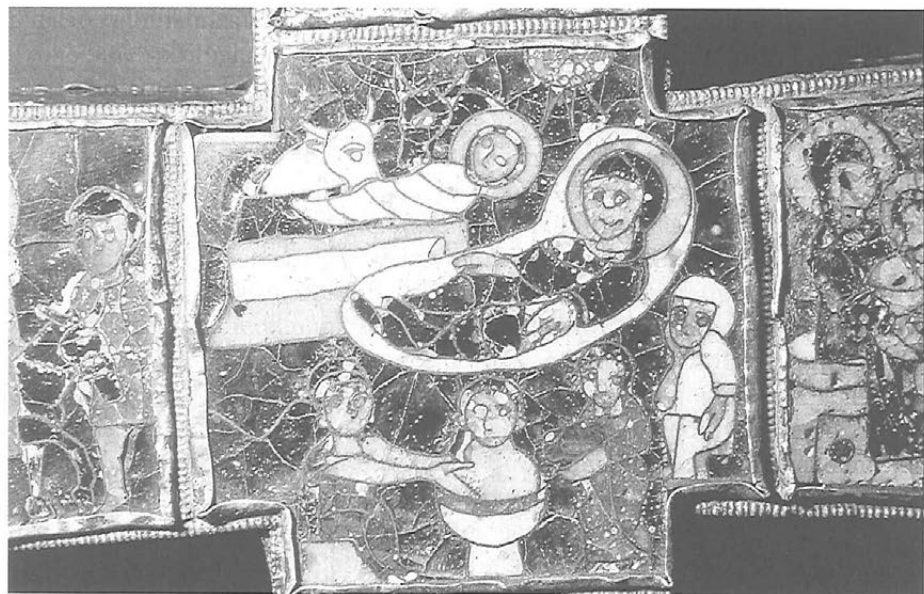


Fig. 6 Nativity. Detail from enamelled gold cross of Paschal I (David Buckton)

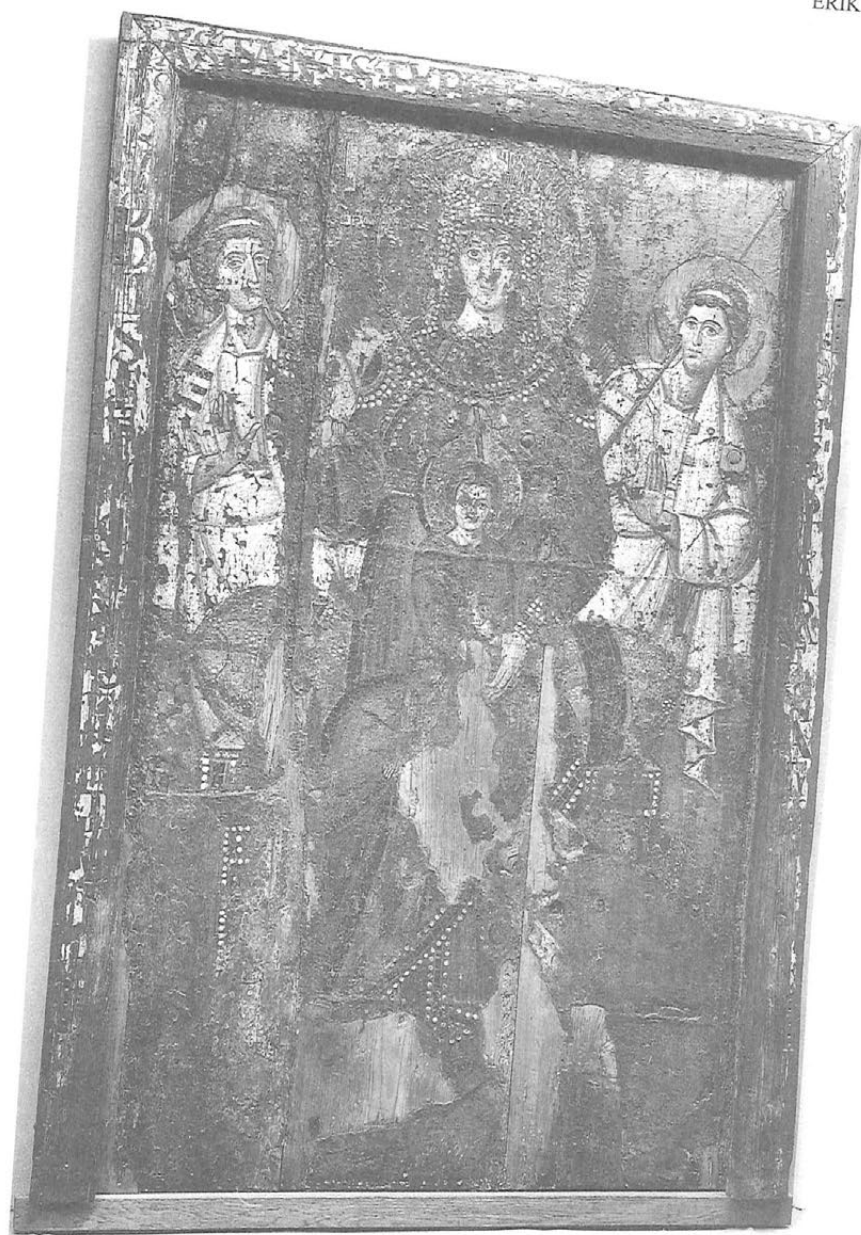


Fig. 7 *Madonna della Clemenza* icon, Santa Maria in Trastevere, Rome
(Bibliotheca Hertziana)



Fig. 8 Last Sacrament. MS Vatican, BAV, Cod. Gr. 699, f. 89r (BAV)

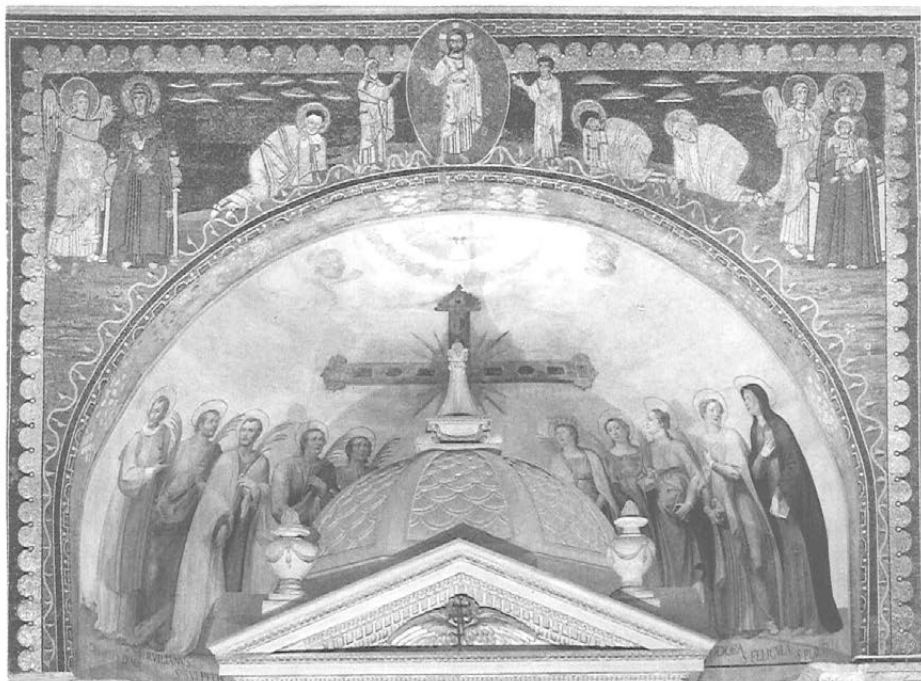


Fig. 9 Mosaic of SS. Nereo ed Achilleo, Rome (Archivio Soprintendenza già Beni Artistici e Storici di Roma, n. 214930, photo R. Sigismondi, 1999)

“*Hoc Visibile Imaginatum Figuratur Illud Invisibile Verum*”: Imagining God in Pictures of Christ

HERBERT L. KESSLER

The Gospel book of Abbess Hitda (MS Darmstadt, Landes- und Hochschule Bibliothek, Cod. 1640) offers a particularly magnificent witness from the very end of the period being considered in this conference of how verbal and pictorial imagery was deployed to represent the invisible. Painted in Cologne around the millennium, it includes a two-page opening near the beginning that opposes *words* bearing on visibility to a *visible* depiction of Christ (ff. 6v-7r; Figs. 2-3 and Colour Plates 4-5).¹ The pictorial representation on the right-hand page presents Christ with his head enclosed by an enormous gold nimbus inscribed by a cross, coloured blue shading to white, and labelled LUX; seated within a double figure-eight mandorla – blue inside and pink around – he holds a codex in one hand while blessing with the other. In the corners, the miniature displays the symbols of the evangelists also holding

¹ P. BLOCH and H. SCHNITZLER, *Die ottonische Kölner Malerschule* (Düsseldorf, 1967), pp. 44-53 and *passim*; *Der Darmstadter Hitda-Codex: Bilder und Zierseiten aus der Handschrift 1640 der Hessischen Landes- und Hochschulbibliothek*, ed. P. BLOCH and E. ZIMMERMANN (Berlin, 1968); H. MAYR-HARTING, *Ottoman Book Illumination: An Historical Study* (London, 1991), pp. 99-110 and *passim*; A. VON EUW, “Die ottonische Kölner Malerschule: Synthese der künstlerischen Strömungen aus West und Ost”, and ID., “Die Maiestas-Domini-Bilder der ottonischen Kölner Malerschule im Licht des platonischen Weltbildes”, in: *Kaiserin Theophanu: Begegnung des Ostens und Westens um die Wende des ersten Jahrtausends*, ed. A. VON EUW and P. SCHREINER (Cologne, 1991), pp. 251-280 and 379-398; W. DIEBOLD, *Word and Image: An Introduction to Early Medieval Art* (Boulder, Colorado, 2000), pp. 124-126; B. KÜHNEL, *The End of Time in the Order of Things: Science and Eschatology in Early Medieval Science* (Regensburg, 2003).

codices and, at left and right where the circles of the mandorla intersect, the “*quatuor rotae*” of Ezekiel’s prophecy (Ez 1, 16). Sandwiched between Jerome’s preface *Plures fuisse* and the canon tables, the *Majestas Domini* makes visible the argument that the four Gospels embody a single invisible source of which the events they report are merely realizations in time and place – “histories”, as Jerome put it, that “construct truth”.² That truth is, of course, Christ, the Word-Made-Flesh, who in his person fulfilled (and abrogated) Hebrew scripture and who inspired the texts that follow in the manuscript. To argue the unique authenticity of the Gospels, Jerome cited the four rivers of paradise, the four corners of the ark of the covenant and its four rings, and especially Ezekiel’s vision of the “appearance of the glory of the Lord (*visio similitudinis gloriae Domini*)” amid the four beasts, and the four “wheels within wheels”, that is, various visible things described in the Old Testament that figure the unity of scripture derived from the eternal and invisible God, and also John’s vision in the Book of Revelation which is one of the picture’s principal sources.

Given the inclusion of the *Plures fuisse* in the Hitda codex and the familiarity of the ideas that had engendered the *Majestas Domini* in the first place, the words inscribed on the facing page seem superfluous:

This visible product of the imagination represents the invisible truth
Whose splendour penetrates the world through the two-times-two lights of the new doctrine.³

A close examination of the language, however, points to a Carolingian mediation of the patristical concept and reveals the subtleties that resonate with the picture. Drawing on Jerome and Cassiodorus, Alcuin had referred to the evangelists as “*bis binis*” in his *De incarnatione Christi et de duabus in eo naturis*;⁴ and Hrabanus Maurus likened the four “*sermones evangelicae*” to candelabra.⁵ Like the four beasts, the “two-times-two lights of the new doctrine” allude to the Gospels as the supersession of the Old Law and also distinguish the apostles Matthew and John from the lower evangelists Mark and Luke. More important, Alcuin and Hincmar of Reims, relying on Augustine, used the term “invisible truth” to refer to the Trinity.⁶ Such elements as the halo and back-

² D. DE BRUYNE, *Préfaces de la Bible latine* (Namur, 1920), pp. 155-156.

³ “*Hoc visibile imaginatum figurat illud invisibile veru(m), cuius splendor penetrat mundu(m), cum bis binis candelabris, ipsius novi sermonis*”.

⁴ Ed. in: *PL* 101, col. 271.

⁵ *Commentaria in libros Machabaeorum*, 1. 4; ed. in: *PL* 109, col. 1160.

⁶ “*Quod est unus, solus, beatus, potens, invisibilis, verus Deus, ipsa Trinitas*”; Alcuin, *De*

lighted figure-eight mandorla may evoke the Triune God; but, in accord with John's declaration that "anyone who has seen me has seen the Father" (Io 14, 9),⁷ in the painting, Christ – the only member of the Trinity who was seen by humans – stands in for the "invisible truth".

Like the *titulus*, the picture too relies on Carolingian sources.⁸ As Bianca Kühnel has shown, the composition is the culmination of a development going back to the Weingarten Gospels painted at Tours ca. 830 (MS Stuttgart, Württembergische Landesbibliothek, Cod. HB II, 40, f. 1v; Fig. 1 and Colour Plate 6) which pictures Christ seated on the globe against the blue heaven, here a simple oval filled with clouds and dotted with stars, set on a pink ground.⁹ The Turonian system is preserved as well in the later Le Mans Gospels painted in the 850s (MS Paris, BN, lat. 261, f. 18r; Fig. 4) and came to be widely disseminated. It is incorporated, for instance, in the Benedictional of Aethelwold (MS London, BL, 49598, f. 70r; Fig. 5 and Colour Plate 7),¹⁰ adorned at Winchester a decade or so before the Hitda Gospels, there picturing the "omnipotent Trinity, the one and true God" in much the same way as in the Turonian Gospel books. Seated on an orb-throne cocooned in an aureole and with his feet resting on a footstool, Christ (identified by the cross-nimbus) holds a book and blesses. Constructed of the letter O of the epithetical declaration of the unity of the Trinity,¹¹ the mandorla is centred on Christ's navel; formed by the compass used to line the pages and construct the letters of the book, it proclaims visually that the Word, Christ's body, and the Lord's *doxa* are generated by the same God.¹² And filled with light-struck clouds, the mandorla

fide sanctae et individuae Trinitatis, ed. in: PL 101, col. 35; Hincmar, *Collectio de una et non trina deitate, sanctae videlicet et inseparabilis trinitatis unitate*, ed. in: PL 125, col. 606.

⁷ F. BOESPFLUG and Y. ZALUSKA, "La dogme trinitaire et l'essor de son iconographie en Occident de l'époque carolingienne au IV^e Concile du Latran (1215)", *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale* 37 (1994), pp. 181-240; C. CHAZELLE, "Christ and the vision of God: The biblical diagrams of the Codex Amiatinus", in: *The Mind's Eye: Art and Theological Argument in the Middle Ages*, ed. A.-M. BOUCHÉ and J. HAMBURGER (Princeton, forthcoming).

⁸ S. KASPERSEN, "Majestas Domini – Regnum et Sacerdotium: Zu Entstehung und Leben des Motivs bis zum Investiturstreit", *Hafnia: Copenhagen Papers in the History of Art* 8 (1981), pp. 83-146.

⁹ W. KOEHLER, *Die karolingischen Miniaturen*, 4 vols. (Berlin, 1930-1971), 1, *Die Schule von Tours* (Berlin, 1930-1933), pp. 376-377.

¹⁰ R. DESHMAN, *The Benedictional of Aethelwold* (Princeton, 1995); B. RAW, *Trinity and Incarnation in Anglo-Saxon Art and Thought* (Cambridge, 1997).

¹¹ "OM[N]P[OTEN]S TRINITAS UNUS ET VERUS D[E]US PATER FILIUS ET SP[IRITUS] S[AN]C[TUS]".

¹² It is telling that a similar page, absent the depiction of the figure, faces the miniature of the Second Coming (ff. 9v and 10r); while Christ returns as king of kings, the words and empty mandorla/O remind the reader that only the blessed will see him "face to face". DESHMAN, *Benedictional*, pp. 62-69, and *passim*.

suggests the unseeable persons in the God-Man. Discerning the Trinity in the Benedictional miniature requires a dynamic process, what Celia Chazelle terms "ruminative meditation"; Christ must be understood as both the Son and the Triune God and a mandorla and the letter 'O' as his glory.

In the Hitda Gospels, the tie between Christ and the mechanics of writing is not marked by an emphatic centre point; and even though the intersecting circles of the mandorla are in fact made by a compass, they appear to be drawn freehand. But the Trinity is introduced here, too, albeit in other ways – by the light trying to break through behind the human Lord and the reference in the *titulus* to the "*visibile verbum*", a term deployed by Alcuin and other Carolingian theologians to describe the Triune God. It is conjured up as well by the use of "*imaginatum*" to describe the *Majestas Domini*; in contrast to "*pictum*" (introduced in the very next caption) or the more usual "*imago*", "*imaginatum*" was deployed in Trinitarian speculation, as condensed for instance by Hrabanus Maurus, to indicate that the relationship between the three Persons can only be understood by means of a mental process.¹³ Following Augustine, Hincmar had argued that, while God can not be seen with human eyes, he can be contemplated by means of material things in a reciprocal process of corporal and mental meditation.¹⁴ The Hitda Gospels put this concept into play by the juxtaposition of text and picture and, in the *Majestas* itself, by the figure-eight mandorla and the deployment of light, two elements that deserve particular focus.

As Herbert Schade,¹⁵ Anton von Euw, and Bianca Kühnel have shown, the figure-eight mandorla derives from an ancient diagram of the intersection of the moveable and fixed stars. Preserved in the second-century BC papyrus of Eudoxus in the Paris (MS Paris, Louvre, Papyrus 1), the intersecting circles entered Chalcidius's commentary on Plato's *Timaeus* and was copied in numerous medieval manuscripts including the eleventh-century codex in Cologne (MS Cologne, Dombibliothek, Cod. 192, f. 43v; Fig. 6).¹⁶ Bede knew the schema

¹³ *De universo*, 4. 10: "*Neque doleysi (δοκῆσαι) id est putative imaginatum: sed corpus verum, non tantum carnem ex carne (sicut Marcianus) sed verus Deus ex divinitate, et verus homo ex carne: unus filius in divinitate, Verbum Patris, et Deus in homine, anima et caro*" (ed. in: PL 111, cols. 96-97).

¹⁴ III *De diversa et multiplici animae ratione ad Carolum Calvum regem* (ed. in: PL 125, col. 947). Cf. Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, 22. 29.

¹⁵ H. SCHADE, "Der 'Himmlische Mensch': Zur anthropologischen Struktur des biblischen Menschbildes in der Kunst", in: *Christus und Maria: Menschensohn und Gottesmutter*, ed. V. ELBERN (Berlin, 1988), pp. 18-27.

¹⁶ A. STÜCKELBERGER, *Bild und Wort: Das illustrierte Fachbuch in der antiken Naturwissenschaft, Medizin und Technik* (Mainz, 1994), pp. 21-23.

and, in the *De temporum ratione*, he quoted Ecclesiastes (Ecl 1, 5-6) to gloss it as a diagram of the diurnal cycle:

The sun rises and the sun goes down; back it returns to its place and rises there again.¹⁷

An early Carolingian commentary on Bede explained the figure-eight as "two interwoven circles connected by a single essence";¹⁸ and Hrabanus Maurus brought the several ideas together in his commentary on Ezekiel (whose vision is one of the bases of the *Majestas Domini*), quoting Ecclesiastes and extending the figure to the unity of the four Gospels. Following Jerome's preface, Hrabanus also cited the "*rota in medio rotae*", going beyond the *Plures fuisse* to argue that the Gospels are not simply individual witnesses of Christ but, in their inter-workings, also manifestations of his complex nature. Hrabanus compared the figure to the spiritual reading of Hebrew scripture through which Christ is revealed,¹⁹ specifically likening the wheel-in-wheels to the intersection of the two testaments and invoking Jacob's ladder on which angels ascended and descended.²⁰ Understood through these texts, the figure-eight mandorla and wheel-in-wheels do not simply represent Christ's place in the cosmos but provoke an engagement in the kinetic interaction between prophetic words and messianic realization and between the human and divine natures.²¹ In turn, they figure the eternal movement in the Unmoved Mover.

Billowing up and around the Saviour – like two parachutes to use Kühnel's characterization – the mandorla of the Hitda Gospels looks distinctly like a cloth; in fact, it appears to be tied in the middle. As such, it is a precursor of the knotted veils that more than two centuries later figure the *deus absconditus* in the Rothschild Canticles (MS New Haven, Yale University, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, 404);²² and like them, it surely also makes reference to the curtain that closed off the Sancta Sanctorum where, always hidden from

¹⁷ C. 32 (ed. in: PL 90, col. 439).

¹⁸ "*De una essentia innectuntur sibi duo circuli*" (ed. in: PL 90, col. 225).

¹⁹ "*Itaque dum spiritaliter littera ejus intelligitur, omnis in eo illa carnalis exhibitio vivificat*" (ed. in: PL 100, col. 529).

²⁰ "*Rota quoque in rota vel duorum junctura testamentorum est quod indicat scala Jacob*" (ed. in: PL 100, col. 526).

²¹ The tituli in the Le Mans Gospels *Majestas* reinforce the idea. One, a variant of the titulus in the Weingarten Gospels, reads downward: In this elevated place, God sits as king of the world and glory of heaven; the other, the fountain metaphor, moves the eye from bottom to top.

²² Cf. J. HAMBURGER, *The Rothschild Canticles: Art and Mysticism in Flanders and the Rhineland Circa 1300* (New Haven, 1990), esp. pp. 133-142.

view, God had manifested himself to the Jews.²³ In this way, it is yet another appropriate figure of the veiled meaning of Hebrew prophecy, made manifest in Christ himself and abrogated by his new doctrine. The idea had been figured earlier in the Turonian Bibles (MS London, BL, Add. 10546, f. 449r and MS Paris, BN, lat. 1, f. 415v) and the San Paolo Bible in Rome (MS Rome, Monastery of San Paolo f.l.m., f. 328r; Fig. 7), which picture a Christ-like figure being revealed – literally unveiled – by the evangelist symbols, John's eagle lifting the cloth from above and Matthew's angel blowing into it from below.²⁴ Alcuin had likened the entire process of doctrinal supersession to painting in colours. In his commentary on the first verse of Hebrews 10, "For the Law contains but a shadow, and no true image, of the good things which were to come", he argued that Hebrew scripture is not itself truth, but only the under-drawing of the image of truth painted fully in colour in the New Testament, that is, in the account of Christ.²⁵ The idea was later applied directly to the *Majestas Domini* in the great Trinity Gospels (MS Cambridge, Trinity College, B. 10. 4, f. 16v; Fig. 8), painted probably at Canterbury shortly after the millennium;²⁶ here a veil miraculously lifted at the edges reveals the face of Christ, who is enthroned against the pink mandorla framed by the blue of heaven.

As the barrier between the outer courtyard, symbolizing this world, and the temple's inner sanctum, the curtain was also identified with the visible firmament that shielded the living God from human eyes.²⁷ The cloth above the

²³ Cf. E. COATSWORTH, "Cloth-making and the Virgin Mary in Anglo-Saxon literature and art", in: *Medieval Art: Recent Perspectives: A Memorial Tribute to C.R. Dodwell*, ed. G.R. OWEN-CROCKER and T. GRAHAM (Manchester, 1998), pp. 8-25.

²⁴ H.L. KESSLER, "Facies bibliothecae revelata": Carolingian art as spiritual seeing", in: *Testo e immagine nell'Alto Medioevo*, 2 vols. (Spoleto, 1994: *Atti delle Settimane di Studio del Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo* 41), 2, pp. 533-594 and Plates, reprinted in ID., *Spiritual Seeing: Picturing God's Invisibility in Medieval Art* (Philadelphia, 2000), pp. 149-189.

²⁵ "Umbram enim habens lex futurorum bonorum, non ipsam imaginem rerum. Hoc est, non ipsam veritatem. Usquequo enim veluti in pictura aspiciat quis lineamenta umbrarum, significans quid pingere velit, umbra quaedam est, et non imago: si enim flores ipsos quis colorum intinxerit, et imposuerit super lineamenta, tunc imago efficitur. Tale quiddam erat etiam lex, umbra veritatis" (ed. in: PL 100, col. 1075); cf. T. DALE, *Relics, Prayer, and Politics in Medieval Venetia: Romanesque Painting in the Crypt of Aquileia Cathedral* (Princeton, 1997), p. 76.

²⁶ E. TEMPLE, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts 900-1066* (London, 1976), pp. 83-84.

²⁷ Pliny had traced the very word for heaven (*caelus*) from *caelatum*, that is, from an engraved plate (*Naturalis historia*, 2. 3. 8), an etymology reiterated by Eriugena (*Periphyseon*, 3, tr. Eriugena, *Periphyseon (The Division of Nature)*, ed. I.P. SHELDON-WILLIAMS (Washington, DC, 1987: *Cahiers d'Études Médiévales, Cahier Spécial* 3), p. 343); cf. P.E. DUTTON, *Charlemagne's Mustache and Other Cultural Clusters of a Dark Age* (New York, 2004), p. 94.

Christ-like figure in the San Paolo Bible, for instance, derives from ancient representations of Caelus and is assimilated to the temple curtain through exegesis of the Apocalypse.²⁸ In the Hitda Gospels' *Majestas*, the celestial allusion is effected by the gold stars that adorn the pink mandorla and the blue sky opened in it. More important, it is conveyed by the brilliant white corona that serves, as the clouds do in the Benedictional of St. Aethelwold, to indicate the invisible spirit made visible through Christ's humanity. Indeed, the pink hue created as the white light mixed with the red of the velum indexes Christ's two natures, a trope picked up in his mantle, also adorned with gold star-like designs, which – following the grading of the cross-nimbus – modulates from white through pink to red, the white representing his divinity and the (blood) red his humanity.²⁹ The temple curtain is identified with Christ's person in the Epistle to Hebrews, specifically with his Passion, which abrogated the old cult and opened the Sanctum Sanctorum to all believers:

So now, my friends, the blood of Jesus makes us free to enter boldly into the sanctuary by the new, living way which he has opened for us through the curtain, the way of his flesh (Heb 10, 19-20).³⁰

The pink curtain embroidered with gold stars that wraps Christ's body in the picture also resonates with the text written in gold on red vellum on the facing page. Red-stained vellum had long been likened to the Word-Made-Flesh bloodied during the Passion.³¹ The metaphor was elaborated in the colophon of the earliest illuminated manuscript connected to Charlemagne, the Godescalc Evangeliary of 781-783 (MS Paris, BN, n.a.l. 1203, f. 126v; Fig. 9),³² which

²⁸ KESSLER, " 'Facies bibliothecae revelata' ", in: ID., *Spiritual Seeing*, pp. 187-188.

²⁹ In 797, Charlemagne sent Alcuin four gifts symbolizing creation, including a vestment adorned with the firmament commemorating the second day; cf. DUTTON, *Charlemagne's Mustache*, p. 98.

³⁰ H.L. KESSLER, "Through the temple veil: The holy image in Judaism and Christianity", *Kairos*, 32-33 (1990-1991), pp. 53-77 (reprinted in: *Studies in Pictorial Narrative* (London, 1994), pp. 49-73); HAMBURGER, *Rothschild Canticles*, pp. 138-140.

³¹ C. MEIER and R. SUNTRUP, "Zum Lexikon der Farbenbedeutungen im Mittelalter: Einführung zu Gegenstand und Methoden sowie Probeartikel aus Farbenbereich 'Rot' ", *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 21 (1987), pp. 390-478; J. GELLRICH, *The Idea of the Book in the Middle Ages: Language Theory, Mythology, and Fiction* (Ithaca, 1985).

³² Ed. in: *Poetae Latini aevi Carolini* (I), ed. E. DÜMMLER (Berlin, 1881: MGH PP 1), pp. 94-95; W. KOEHLER, *Die karolingischen Miniaturen*, 2, *Die Hofschule Karls des Grossen* (Berlin, 1958), pp. 22-28; B. BRENN, "Schriftlichkeit und Bildlichkeit in der Hofschule Karls d. Gr.", in: *Testo e immagine nell'Alto Medioevo*, 2 vols. (Spoleto, 1994: *Atti delle Settimane di Studio del Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo* 41), 2, pp. 631-682; U. ERNST, "Farbe und

compares God's teachings – written in gold and silver letters on purple leaves – to the starry heavens through which the faithful gain entrance to heaven, “opened through God's rose-coloured blood”. The poem also tethers the “words of God adorned with the colour of roses” to the “white virginity of heaven's inhabitants” and alludes to the Second Coming by appropriating the language of Luke (Lc 17, 24).³³ Referring to the admixture of the light reflected off the golden letters and the red flesh on which the words are written, the *Godescalc* colophon uses “pink” (*roseus*) not once but twice; pink is the realization of the divine spirit in the Incarnate God.

Framed within an acanthus border, the golden letters on red-stained animal flesh in the Hitda Gospels conjure up God in his human and divine aspects in the same way; literally the splendour (of the “invisible truth”), the shimmer off the words penetrates the world through Christ described in the four Gospels. The *titulus* is thus another figure of the invisible truth.

The product of “*Christus Lux*” entering matter through scripture, the dominant pink of the Hitda Gospels *Majestas Domini* also refers to the colour of the sky at dawn, another figure of Christ's two natures.³⁴ Drawing on Paulinus of Nola and others who had already applied the metaphor to the arrival of the true Sun of Justice into the world at the incarnation (or to his departure at sunset) Carolingian theologians had introduced “pink” into discussions of the annunciation, nativity, passion, resurrection, ascension, and Second Coming. Alcuin used it in his tract on the dual nature of Christ cited above;³⁵ and in his *Homiliae in Evangelia et Epistolas*, Hrabanus Maurus likened the pink sky of dusk to the passion and the tribulation before his Second Coming.³⁶ Pink was also considered to be a harbinger of the sight of God in the later *Glossa ordinaria*:

Schrift im Mittelalter unter Berücksichtigung antiker Grundlagen und neuzeitlicher Rezeptionsformen”, in: *Testo e immagine*, 1, pp. 343-414; B. REUDENBACH, *Das Godescalc-Evangelistar: Ein Buch für die Reformpolitik Karls des Grossen* (Frankfurt am Main, 1998).

³³ “*Aurea purpureis pinguntur grammata scedis*”.

³⁴ Although badly abraded, the depiction of the watering of flocks in the Vatican Virgil (MS Vatican, BAV, Vat. lat. 3225, f. 6r) provides a Late Antique parallel that was actually available in ninth-century Tours; cf. D. WRIGHT, *The Vatican Vergil: A Masterpiece of Late Antique Art* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1993), p. 13. In the Codex Amiatinus, God is pictured as a golden face against a magenta ground (f. 6); cf. H. KESSLER, “Images of Christ and communication with God”, in: *Comunicare e significare nell'Alto Medioevo* (Spoleto, 2005: *Atti delle Settimane di Studio del Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo* 52) (forthcoming).

³⁵ “*Et rosea coelesti lumine aurora oculis refulget nostris ...*” (ed. in: PL 101, col. 271).

³⁶ “*Signa temporum dixit de adventu suo, vel passione cui simile est roseum coelum vespere, et item de tribulatione ante adventum suum futurum, cui simile est mane roseum cum tristitia coelum*” (ed. in: PL 110, col. 381).

Dawn is the period between the dark of night and the brightness of day, in which salvation enters the Church revealing as the sun does, whose surging pink announces the dawn, with the result that the eyes are prepared to see the splendour when the resurrection of the Lord shines.³⁷

Dawn figured Christ in Carolingian pictures painted at Charlemagne's court during Alcuin's time. In the Aachen Gospels (MS Aachen, Domkapitel, f. 14v; Fig. 10), produced around 800, Christ is not portrayed in person but his presence is suggested by the pink of day breaking in the sky above the four evangelists shown preparing his Gospels.³⁸ In the contemporary Harley Gospels (MS London, BL, Harley 2788), which also does not include a true portrait of Christ, Matthew's angel bearing the *Liber Generationis* mediates between a light-filled pink cloud, casting away the dark shadow of the old order (f. 13v; Fig. 11);³⁹ while below, the heavenly illumination dematerializes the wall behind the evangelist as it enters his being. And in the slightly later Gospels of Saint-Médard de Soissons (MS Paris, BN, lat. 8850, f. 1v; Fig. 12), the light radiating from the Lamb, the lamp of the Apocalyptic city (Apc 21, 23), creates gradients of abstract pink bands as it enters the celestial realm and then dissolves the assertively three-dimensional walls of the tabernacle below, exposed behind the distinctly carnal curtain.⁴⁰

A generation later, the painter of the Weingarten Gospels (MS Stuttgart, Württembergische Landesbibliothek, Cod. HB II 40) took up these experiments in light and colour. In the portrait of Mark (f. 63v; Fig. 13 and Colour Plate 8), the Sun/sun's entrance into the world is registered by means of the evangelist symbol's apparent transforming of the sky from blue to pink. John (f. 146v; Fig. 14 and Colour Plate 9), who alone of the evangelists was privileged to rise into the ether whence he was able to see all of history, occupies a celestial zone stained pink; in contrast to his three counterparts, who are portrayed on thrones

³⁷ *"Diluculum est inter tenebras noctis et diei claritatem in qua salus venit in Ecclesia declaranda more solis, qui consurgens roseam praemittit auroram, ut tantus splendour praeparatis oculis possit videri, cum tempus Dominicae resurrectionis illuxit"* (ed. in: PL 114, col. 241); also, *"Et coelum irradians, roseam praemisit auroram; dum interim verus sol justitiae, Christus, ab inferis victor ascendit, et hora qua voluit, a mortuis immortalis resurrexit"* (ed. in: PL 112, col. 1467).

³⁸ KOEHLER, *Die Karolingischen Miniaturen*, 3, pp. 72-80; 799 *Kunst und Kultur der Karolingerzeit*, ed. Ch. STIEGEMANN and M. WEMHOFF, 3 vols. (Mainz, 1999), 2, pp. 706-710.

³⁹ KOEHLER, *Die karolingische Miniaturen*, 2, pp. 56-69; BRENK, "Schriftlichkeit und Bildlichkeit", p. 656.

⁴⁰ H.L. KESSLER, "The place of Rome between Judea and Francia in early medieval art", in: *Roma fra Oriente e Occidente*, 2 vols. (Spoleto, 2002: *Atti delle Settimane di studio del Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo* 49), 2, pp. 695-718.

against celestial blue backgrounds, only he is seated on a globe throne in a realm filled with pink clouds.⁴¹ Indeed, holding a book in one hand and gesturing with another, John resembles Christ in the Hitda Gospels; and the roseate world he occupies is much the same. The *Majestas Domini* (Fig. 1) in the Turonian book introduces the metaphor of dawn through word as well as image. Dressed in pink and gold, Christ is identified in one *titulus* as “the supreme king and creator of the heaven and the earth”,⁴² that is, as the embodiment of the invisible and visible worlds; and in a second verse, the interpenetration of these two worlds is likened to daybreak:

In the morning (*aurorans*), the evangelists (*animalia*) illuminate the world with heavenly perception.⁴³

The Matthew portrait in the Le Mans Gospels pictures the effect of divine light entering the material world most vividly (MS Paris, BN, lat. 261, f. 17v; Fig. 15 and Colour Plate 10). The milky-white angel occupies the intermediary pink realm; the evangelist resides in the carnal realm of deep red; and separating and joining them is an arc of gold words against purple vellum, Sedulius’ inscription for Matthew: “*Hoc Matthaeus agens, hominem generaliter implet*”. Matthew gazes into a band of pink that doubles the inscribed arc; like the light-struck letters on blood-red vellum, Christ’s two natures, it suggests, enable humankind to comprehend the invisible Divinity. The slightly earlier *Majestas Domini* of the First Bible of Charles the Bald, painted at Tours in 845, merged the implications of pink with the solar symbolism of the figure-eight mandorla (MS Paris, BN, lat. 1, f. 329v; Fig. 16); the intersecting circles diagram the sun

⁴¹ M. SCHAPIRO, “Two romanesque drawings in Auxerre and some iconographic problems”, in: *Studies in Art and Literature for Belle Da Costa Greene*, ed. D. MINER (Princeton, 1952), pp. 331-349 (reprinted in ID., *Romanesque Art* (New York, 1977), pp. 306-327); KESSLER, “*‘Facies bibliothecae revelata’*”, in: ID., *Spiritual Seeing*, pp. 179-186; J. HAMBURGER, *St. John the Divine: The Deified Evangelist in Medieval Art and Theology* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 2002), pp. 43-64.

⁴² Perhaps going back to Alcuin, himself abbot of Tours until his death in 804, the variant is itself significant. Christ is the earthly ruler but the celestial glory.

⁴³ Cf. an anonymous glossary published in: PL 83, col. 1337: “*aurorans, illuminans*”. The light metaphor was incorporated into the harmony page of the *Biblia Gregoriana*: “*Haec est speciosa quadriga luciflua animae spiritus gratia per os agni dei inlustrata in quo quattuor procures consona uoce magnalia dei cantant or -nentes*”; cf. M. BUDNY, “The *Biblia Gregoriana*”, in: *St. Augustine and the Conversion of England*, ed. R. GAMESON (Phoenix Mill, 1999), pp. 237-284.

rising and setting around the true Sun, the "*rex aethereus*"; and the colour indexes his entering the physical world and leaving it.⁴⁴

In the Annunciation miniature of the Hitda Gospels (MS Darmstadt, Landes- und Hochschule Bibliothek, Cod. 1640, f. 20r; Fig. 17 and Colour Plate 11), pink figures "salvation enter(ing) the church" quite directly.⁴⁵ Gabriel, the only personage in the manuscript that transgresses a frame, interrupts the terrestrial world, his words pushing back a curtain of cloud like a sonic boom. Light streams along the cloud's forward edge, white paint that spills gold onto the ground and mixes with the dark red to form the pink that encloses Mary at the moment the spirit enters her flesh. The parallel with the Annunciation in the Benedictional of Aethelwold is striking (MS London, BL, Add. 49598, f. 5v; Fig. 18), where the angel is surrounded by a cloud and Mary, seated within the temple porch, is infused by a similar, albeit redder tone. As Robert Deshman has shown, the miniature draws on a long line of exegesis that built on Luke's use of the word "*obumbrabit*" in his description of the Annunciation: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee" (Lc 1, 35); and indeed, the unusual shadow on the baldachin would seem to be an attempt to figure this directly. More recently, Elizabeth Coatsworth has introduced into the discussion Alcuin's *De fide sanctae et individuae Trinitatis*, in which "the Holy Spirit coming over the blessed Virgin, overshadowed her" is likened to white wool "made purple by the divinity".⁴⁶ Hrabanus Maurus deployed another metaphor based on white and red, comparing the Holy Spirit entering the Virgin's body to the white of lilies and the red of roses.⁴⁷ Both miniatures build on this exegetic tradition, representing the invisible God entering the world by manipulating the very means of art – mixing the light of divinity (white paint and gold) with the red of humanity and forming a picture of this inspired substance.

⁴⁴ "*Rex micat aethereus condigne sive prophetae; Hic, euangelicae quattuor atque tubae*"; KESSLER and DUTTON, *The Poetry and Paintings*, p. 116. Cf. H. SCHADE, "Der 'Himmlische Mensch'", p. 25.

⁴⁵ On Annunciations, cf. H. WENZEL, "Die Verkündigung an Maria: Zur Visualisierung des Wortes in der Szene oder: Schriftgeschichte im Bild", in: *Maria in der Welt: Marienverehrung im Kontext der Sozialgeschichte 10.-18 Jahrhundert*, ed. C. OPITZ (Zürich, 1993), pp. 23-82.

⁴⁶ 3. 14: "*ita Spiritus sanctus superveniens in beatam Virginem, virtus Altissimi obumbravit eam, ut lana fieret divinitate purpurata*" (ed. in: PL 101, col. 46); COATSWORTH, "Clothing-making", p. 14.

⁴⁷ *De laudibus Sanctae Crucis*, Figura XVI: "*Qui et in carnis suae castitate candorem lili demonstravit, et in sanguine passionis rosae ruborem ostendit*" (ed. in: PL 107, col. 213).

What is important here is not symbolism of the colour, but pink's dynamic quality.⁴⁸ In an article on the Sacramentary of Robert of Jumièges (MS Rouen, BM, Y. 6 [274]), produced in Canterbury shortly after the millennium, Jonathan Alexander noted how colour was used in that manuscript to reinforce iconographic themes, yellow to suggest the entrance of grace in the nativity, pink to render the rising sun in the Three Maries at the Tomb, and so forth.⁴⁹ C.R. Dodwell⁵⁰ and R. Deshman⁵¹ have interpreted the swirling, brushed-on pigment in Carolingian and Anglo-Saxon art as a way of expressing spiritual presence. Although these functions, too, certainly underlay the use of pink in the Hitda Gospels *Majestas Domini*, what was important was the colour's capacity to subvert the descriptive aspect of art and hence to activate the mind of the viewer to move beyond the apprehension of the object ostensibly represented through the pigments to the invisible realm beyond. Any colour could be made to serve and its significance varied according to the iconographic situation, sometimes assuming a specific symbolic meaning and at other times a more general, destabilizing function.

Because of its multiple references, however, pink was a particularly apt hue.⁵² The visible harbinger of God's invisible splendour – itself too brilliant to be seen with the eyes of the body – it indexed physical matter infused with spirit; and hence it operated in much the same way as the ubiquitous clouds do in the Benedictional of Aethelwold which, as Deshman showed, served various functions, as in the Annunciation and Trinity to figure spirit coming into matter. In short, it is a dynamic element that engages the viewer in the process of movement from earth to heaven and back again. Like Jacob's ladder cited by Hrabanus Maurus and the wheels within wheels pictured in the Hitda *Majestas*, it generates a continuous, reciprocal motion that is implied by the very term *imaginatum*.

⁴⁸ Cf. P. DRONKE, "Tradition and innovation in medieval western colour-imagery", *Eranos Yearbook* 41 (1972), pp. 51-107; J. GAGE, *Colour and Culture: Practice and Meaning from Antiquity to Abstraction* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1993).

⁴⁹ J. ALEXANDER, "Some aesthetic principles in the use of colour in Anglo-Saxon art", *Anglo-Saxon England* 4 (1975), pp. 145-154.

⁵⁰ C.R. DODWELL, *The Pictorial Arts of the West 800-1200* (New Haven, 1993), p. 108.

⁵¹ DESHMAN, *The Benedictional*, pp. 216-217.

⁵² E.g. John Scotus Eriugena, the philosopher at the court of Charles the Bald when some of the experiments were being conducted, understood colour in just this way; meditating on the rich and changeable relationship between Sacred Scripture and reality, he compared exegetic reading to the "marvellously beautiful variety of innumerable colours [in] a feather of a peacock" (*Periphyseon*, 4. 4, ed. in: *PL* 122, col. 749; tr. SHELDON-WILLIAMS, p. 390).

For all the similarities, then, the *Majestas Domini* in the Hitda Gospels differs in an essential way from its earliest predecessors in the Codex Amiatinus (MS Florence, Biblioteca Laurenziana, Amiatino 1, f. 796v)⁵³ and Gundohinus Gospels (MS Autun, Bibliothèque de la Ville, 3, f. 12r; Fig. 19)⁵⁴ of 751-754, and also such early Carolingian witnesses as the one in the Lorsch Gospels (MS Bucharest, National Library, R. II. 1, p. 36).⁵⁵ Those picture the enthroned Christ as a majestic but static presence, the wreathes opening a direct glimpse into the heavenly abode where he now resides. The later Carolingian pictorial experiments and the Ottonian "visible product of the imagination" represent not God but rather the processes through which he had revealed himself.

What explains the continuous experimentation with the *Majestas Domini* and other subjects in Carolingian and Ottonian art and the new conception of representing the invisible dynamically surely was the debate over images precipitated in the West by Byzantine developments. Celia Chazelle has argued that, partly as a reaction to the Quinisext Council (692), the sequence of medallions in the first quire of the early eighth-century Codex Amiatinus introduced a kinetic contemplation of the Trinity;⁵⁶ and Lawrence Nees has suggested that the celestial venue of Christ in the Gundohinus Gospels and the cherubim flanking him may already be responses to certain issues generated by Eastern iconoclasm.⁵⁷ The later Carolingian versions of the theme, which culminated in the Hitda Gospels, were most likely engendered by the more complex and serious engagement with the issues of art that followed.

These issues had to do precisely with the relationship between visible images and God's divinity. For Theodulf of Orléans and later, Claudius of Turin, no relationship could exist: sensible things fashioned by humans had no spiritual value. "To contemplate Christ who is the power and the wisdom of God", the *Opus caroli* (*Libri carolini*) assert, "requires not corporeal vision we share with irrational animals but rather spiritual sight".⁵⁸ Defenders of images

⁵³ CHAZELLE, "Christ and the vision of God".

⁵⁴ L. NEES, *The Gundohinus Gospels* (Cambridge, MA, 1987).

⁵⁵ KOEHLER, *Die karolingischen Miniaturen*, 2, pp. 88-100; W. BRAUNFELS, *The Lorsch Gospels*, 2 vols. (New York, 1967).

⁵⁶ K. CORSANO, "The first quire of the Codex Amiatinus and the *Institutiones* of Cassiodorus", *Scriptorium*, 41 (1987), pp. 3-34; L. NEES, "Problems of form and function in early medieval illustrated bibles from Northwest Europe", in: *Imaging the Early Medieval Bible*, ed. J. WILLIAMS (University Park, PA, 1999), pp. 148-177; CHAZELLE, "Christ and the vision of God".

⁵⁷ NEES, *The Gundohinus Gospels*, pp. 183-187.

⁵⁸ "Ad contemplandum itaque Christum, qui est Dei virtus and Dei sapientia . . . non corporeus nobis visus, quem communem cum irrationalibus animantibus habemus, sed est necessarius" (Theodulf of Orléans, *Opus Caroli Regis contra Synodum* (*Libri Carolini*), 2. 22,

in the West responded to the attack on images, in part, by emphasizing their dynamic rather than representational function. An example is the mid-eighth-century interpolation into the genuine letter Gregory the Great had written a century and half earlier to the hermit Secundinus, which came to be circulated as an authentic pronouncement of the venerable Pope:

We do no harm in wishing to show the invisible by means of the visible ... We know that you do not ask for an image of our Saviour to venerate it as a God, but in recalling the Son of God, to rekindle the love of Him whose image you wish to see.⁵⁹

The argument that looking at a material image propelled the mind of the viewer beyond the object was reiterated by Pope Hadrian I who, among other claims, maintained that the mind could transform the sight of a physical image into a spiritual contemplation:

Because wherever there is in Christianity in the entire world, sacred and enduring images are honoured and maintained by all the faithful so that by a spiritual force our mind is carried up through the visible face to the invisible majesty of divinity through the contemplation of the imaged depicted in human form, which the son of God deigned to assume for our salvation.⁶⁰

A short time later, Pope Paschal I (817-824) made the same point in this letter to the Emperor Leo V, arguing from Christ's own dual nature, that the faithful are guided through images toward the divine truth,⁶¹ and he went on to claim that pictures are not essentially different from words of Scripture inscribed on a page in their capacity to engender a mental process from which spiritual messages emerge:

ed. A. FREEMAN (Hannover, 1998: *MGH CONC 2, Supplementum 1*), pp. 275-276).

⁵⁹ *Registrum epistularum*, ed. D. NORBERG, 2 vols. (Turnhout, 1982: CCSL 140-140A), 2, pp. 1110-1111; D. APPLEBY, "Instruction and inspiration through images in the Carolingian period", in: *Word, Image, Number: Communication in the Middle Ages*, ed. J. CONTRENI (Florence, 2002), pp. 85-111; H.L. KESSLER, "Gregory the Great and image theory in Northern Europe in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries", in: *A Companion to Medieval Art: Romanesque and Gothic in Northern Europe*, ed. C. RUDOLPH (Oxford: Blackwell Companions to Art History) (in press).

⁶⁰ *Hadrianum* 24, ed. K. HAMPE in: *Epistolae Karolini aevi (III)*, p. 55; APPLEBY, "Instruction and inspiration", p. 90.

⁶¹ "Καταδέχῃ εἰκόσι χειραγωγείσθαι πρὸς τὴν ἀλήθειαν" (ed. G. MERCATI (Vatican, 1901: *Studi e Testi* 5), pp. 227 ff.); A. ENGLER, "La difesa delle immagini intrapresa dalla chiesa di Roma nel IX secolo", in: *Caelius I: Santa Maria in Domnica, San Tommaso in Formis e il Clivus Scauri* (Rome, 2003), pp. 257-284, at p. 272.

The word expresses the movements of the mind, is it not also recognized that the image is a mental representation?⁶²

The defense of images promulgated by Pope Nicholas I in 863 and repeated in 870 echoed these sentiments:

We ought to adore the sacred image of Jesus Christ our Lord and liberator and saviour of all with honour equal to that of the book of the holy Gospels. Just as we all follow the salvation borne through words in a book, so through the workings of the colours of an image; and educated and simple people alike, without difficulty from them it is carried to the useful end; because the one in the word of a discourse and a writing, the other in colour.⁶³

And the arguments were reiterated and strengthened at the Council of Arras in 1025, just a short time after the Hitda Gospelbook was completed:⁶⁴ "through images, we are excited internally to the contemplation of the workings of Divine Grace". Pictures are useful, then, not because they actually represent God, but because – "*per colorum imaginariam operationem*" – they engage viewers in a dynamic, mental process analogous to that needed to contemplate the invisible Deity.

Whether or not the opening in the Hitda Gospels engaged these theological arguments directly, it certainly relied on ninth-century sources that did. In those, art had been radically transformed in response to eighth- and ninth-century image theory. As is well known, Late Antique traditions were revived; but even more important, they were inserted into novel modes of representation in which words, colours, materials, symbols, and figures were enlisted in a non-classical manner to conduct the viewer away from the world toward the "invisible truth". Beginning in the Godescalc Evangeliary and continuing

⁶² "Καὶ ὁ λόγος δὲ πάλιν ἐκκαλῶν τοῦ τὰ κινήματα οὐχὶ εἰκῶν τοῦτου ὥσπερ".

⁶³ "*Sacram imaginem domini nostri Jesu Christi et omnium liberatoris et salvatoris aequo honore cum libro sanctorum evangeliorum adorari decernimus. Sicut enim per syllabarum eloquia, quae in libro feruntur, salutem consequemur omnes; iis per colorum imaginariam operationem, et sapientes et idiotae cuncti, ex eo quod in promptu est, perfruuntur utilitate; quae enim in syllabis sermo, haec et scriptura, quae in coloribus est, praedicat, et commendat*" (ed. in: *Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio*, ed. J.D. MANSI, 31 vols. (Florence and Venice, 1759-1798), 16, col. 161). Cf. J.-C. SCHMITT, "L'Occident: Nicée II et les images du VIII^e au XIII^e siècle", in: *Nicée II 787-1987: Douze siècles d'images religieuses*, ed. F. BÈSPFLUG and N. LOSSKY (Paris, 1987), p. 281.

⁶⁴ "*Similiter de ymaginibus sanctorum ratiocinari licet, quae ideo in sancta aecclesia fiunt, non ut ab hominibus adorari debeant, sed ut per eas interius excitentur ad contemplandam gratiae divinae operationem*" (ed. in: *PL*, 142, cols. 1306-1307).

throughout the period, various “products of the imagination” were set in oscillation with one another – texts written in gold, coloured pictures, and cosmic diagrams – to affirm and subvert in sequence the mental striving considered essential to any attempt to grasp the Divine Nature. The result is like the wheel within wheels and the world transformed at daybreak, protean representations of the very effort that humans must make even to imagine the ineffable divine energy.

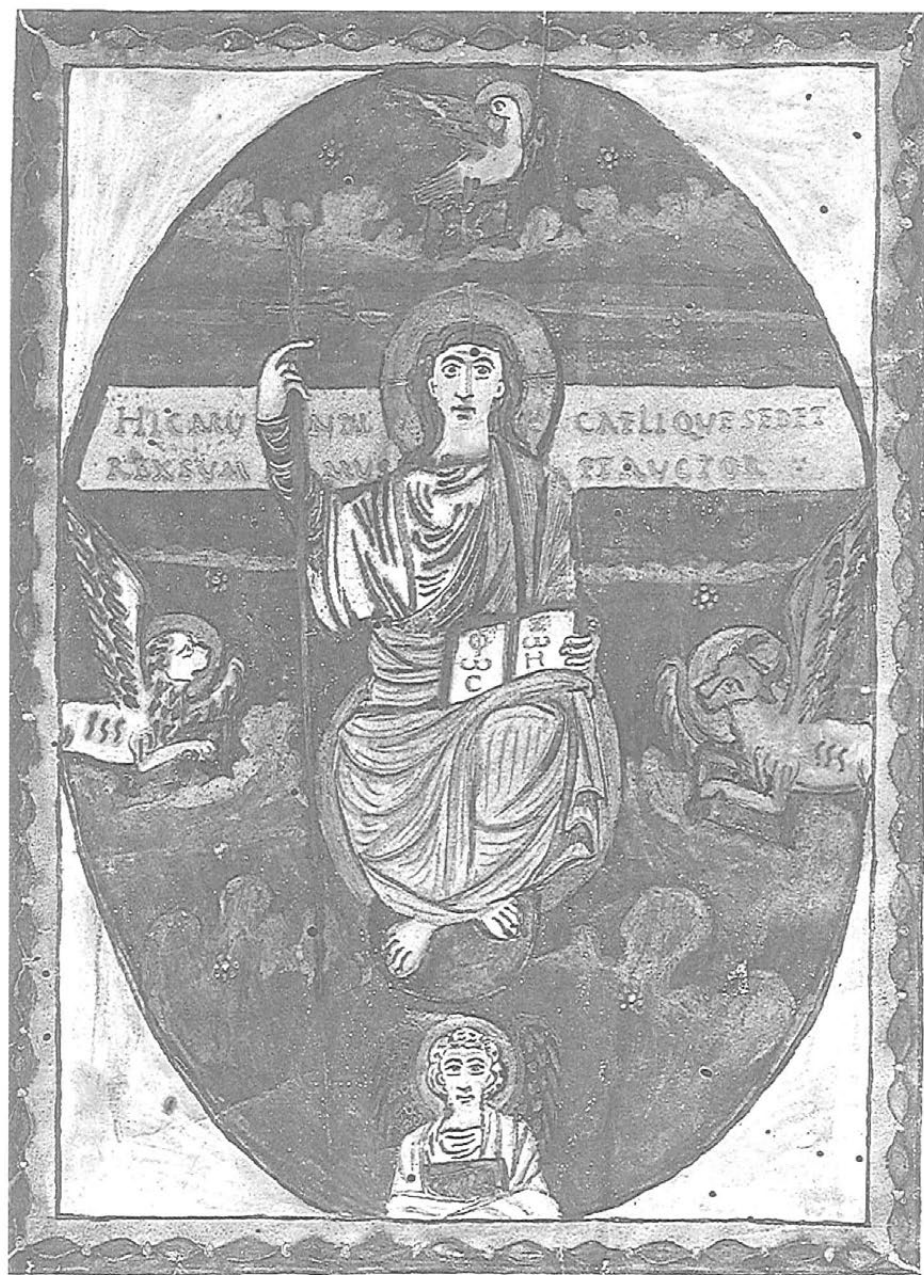


Fig. 1 MS Stuttgart, Württembergische Landesbibliothek, Cod. HB II 40, f. 1v
(see also Colour Plate 6)



Fig. 2 MS Darmstadt, Landes- und Hochschule Bibliothek, Cod. 1640, f. 6v
(see also Colour Plate 4)

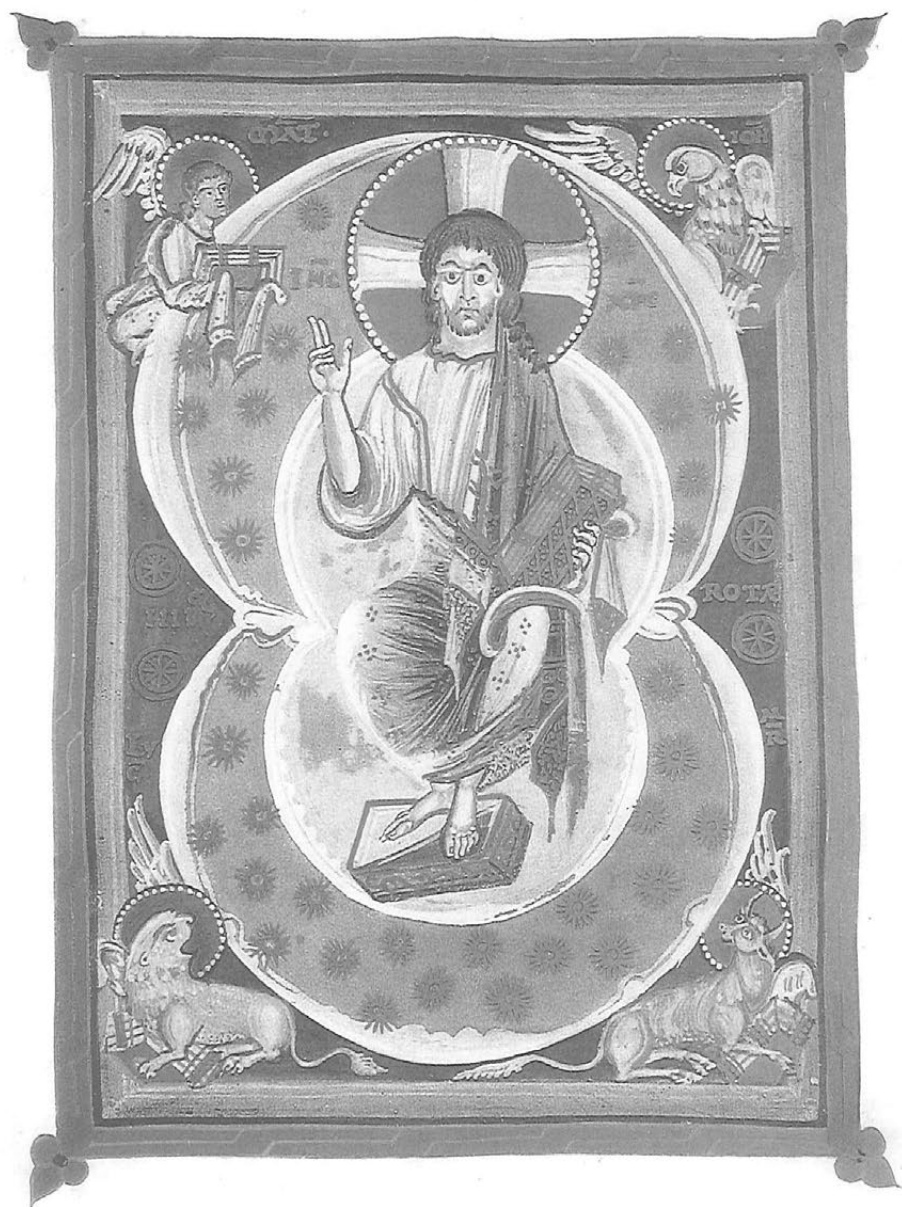


Fig. 3 MS Darmstadt, Landes- und Hochschule Bibliothek, Cod. 1640, f. 7r
(see also Colour Plate 5)



Fig. 4 MS Paris, BN, lat. 261, f. 18r

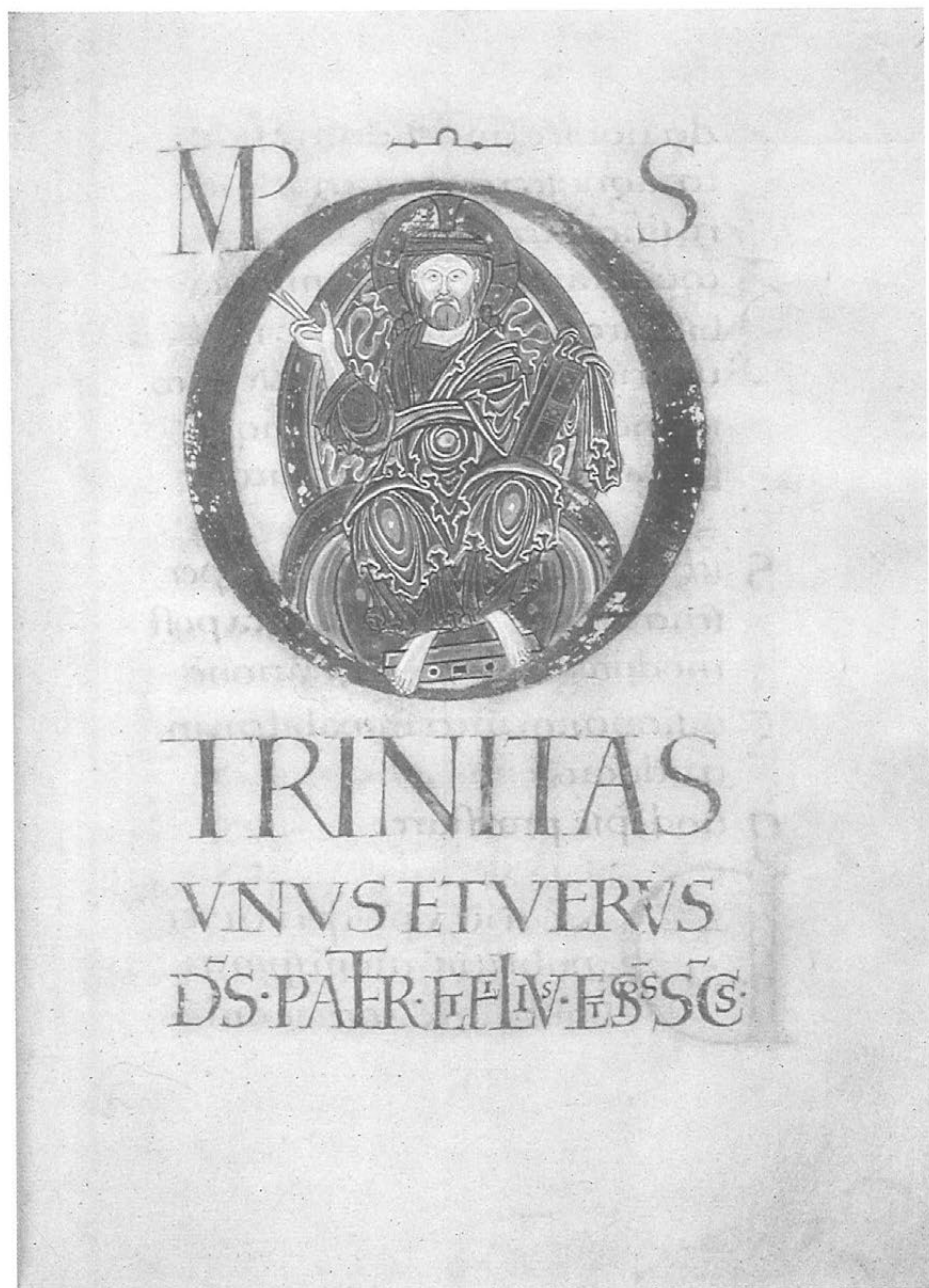
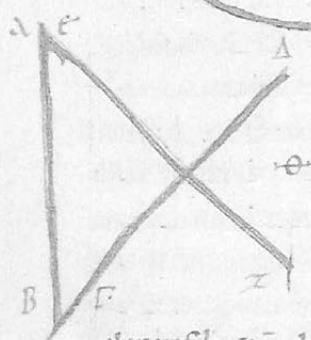
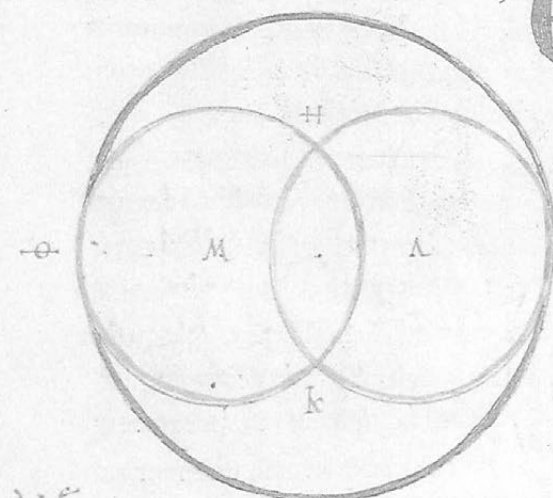


Fig. 5 MS London, BL, Add. 49598, f. 70r (see also Colour Plate 7)

medietatib. octo. & noue. sex. & duodeci limitu int uallu cumuunt epura.
 lre scilicet pluri potentia pidesq. utit ignis limite treq. aliu limite iserisactis
 & aq. matius mund corp cunatu. ita numerox. potentia iseris ta q. dlon
 tis nrisq. mbra aqms intelligibilia conecceperent. cet q. a lig int anura corp
 similitudo. hancq. serie n mti. on. neq. corp secuit iq. d. s. ut si q. i. a. b. rati
 lura i longu f. dat & desegm. b. duob. chi faaat. f. a. e. z. idipfu
 i curu & demu & duos in nexos sibi iuice circulos faaat. H. O. K. A. &
 H. M. K. N.



EOSQ. ipsos exa prior. alio
 circulo cui mor. cunioq. ide
 sep. & uniformis sit. arcu luge
 id aplan. hui q. ppe orbis
 lura agnatio sep. eade sep.
 N. eq. li uelo citat. neelo ai q. de
 illu desiderans extra c. suet
 a bit. semita. & extioris q. de
 arcu luge eade q. i aplan
 globo sum. que meridu
 lenos. ga mesen brinon ap
 pellant. utruq. coplecti

polu. cuq. isde uerq. labundu aplans glo br. effi
 gie declinare. intior u. arcu luge i. telligi debet.
 isiq. signox. auster. ordo. sub. que planex. f. sen
 Ideoq. extiore motu eunde cognosimur. q. id
 sep. m. meq. differens. aplan uolat. Interior
 u. diuisu. cuncti eni q. sub zodiacu obertant
 planetes. licet i orbe referant singuli. diuisa tam uariis decursis. &

Fig. 6 MS Cologne, Dombibliothek, Cod. 192, f. 43v

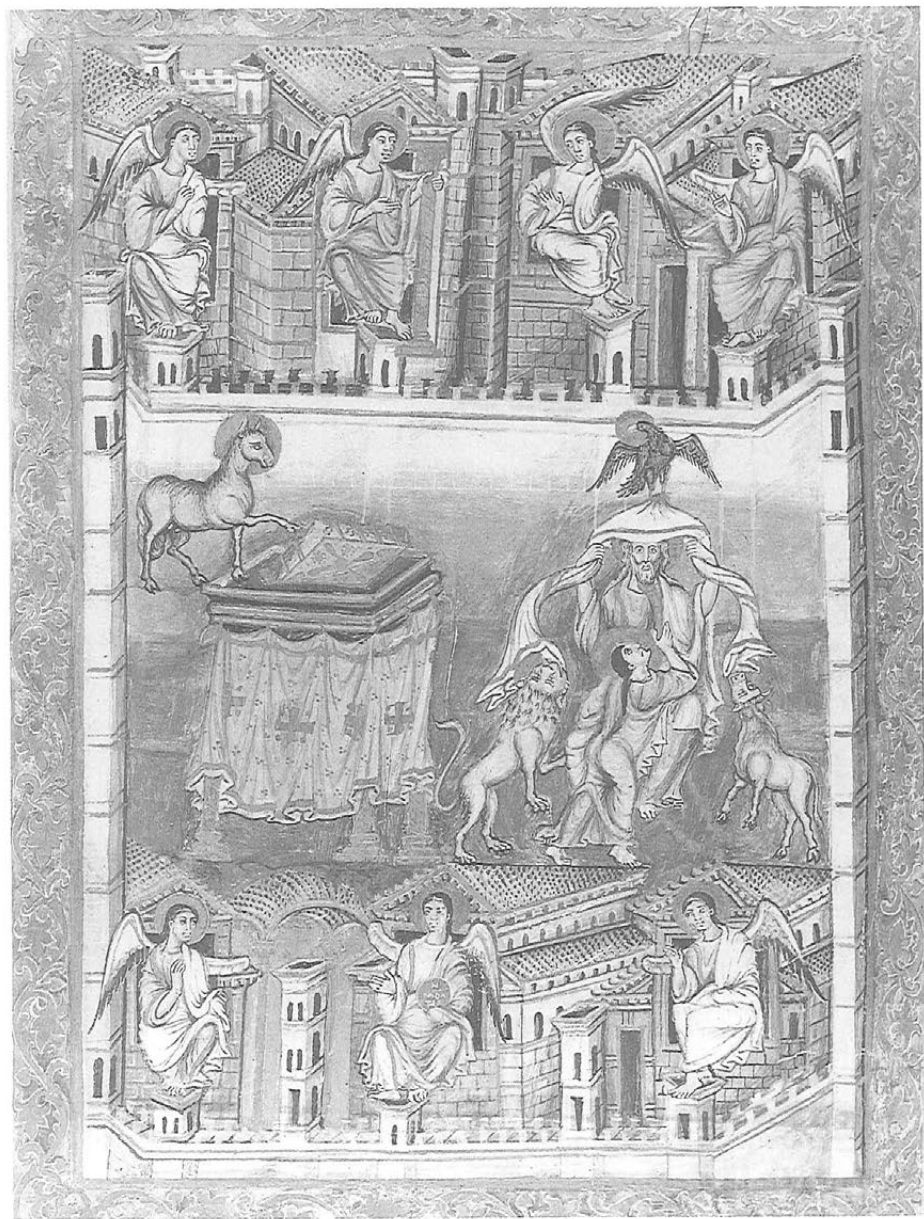


Fig. 7 MS Rome, Monastero di San Paolo f.l.m., Bible, f. 328r



Fig. 8 MS Cambridge, Trinity College, MS B. 10. 4, f. 16v (permission of the Master and Fellows of Trinity College)

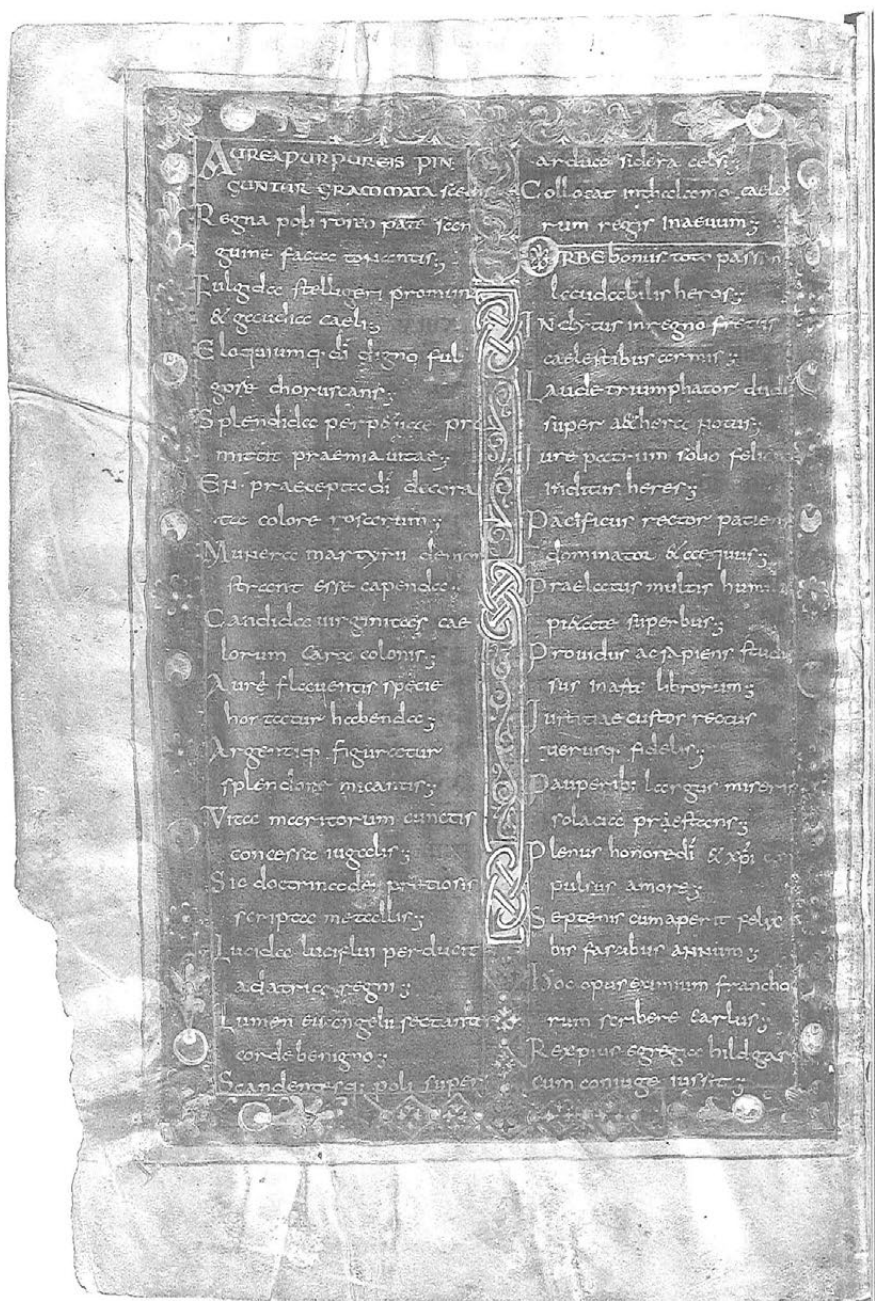


Fig. 9 MS Paris, BN, n.a.l. 1203, f. 126v



Fig. 10 MS Aachen, Domkapitel, f. 14v

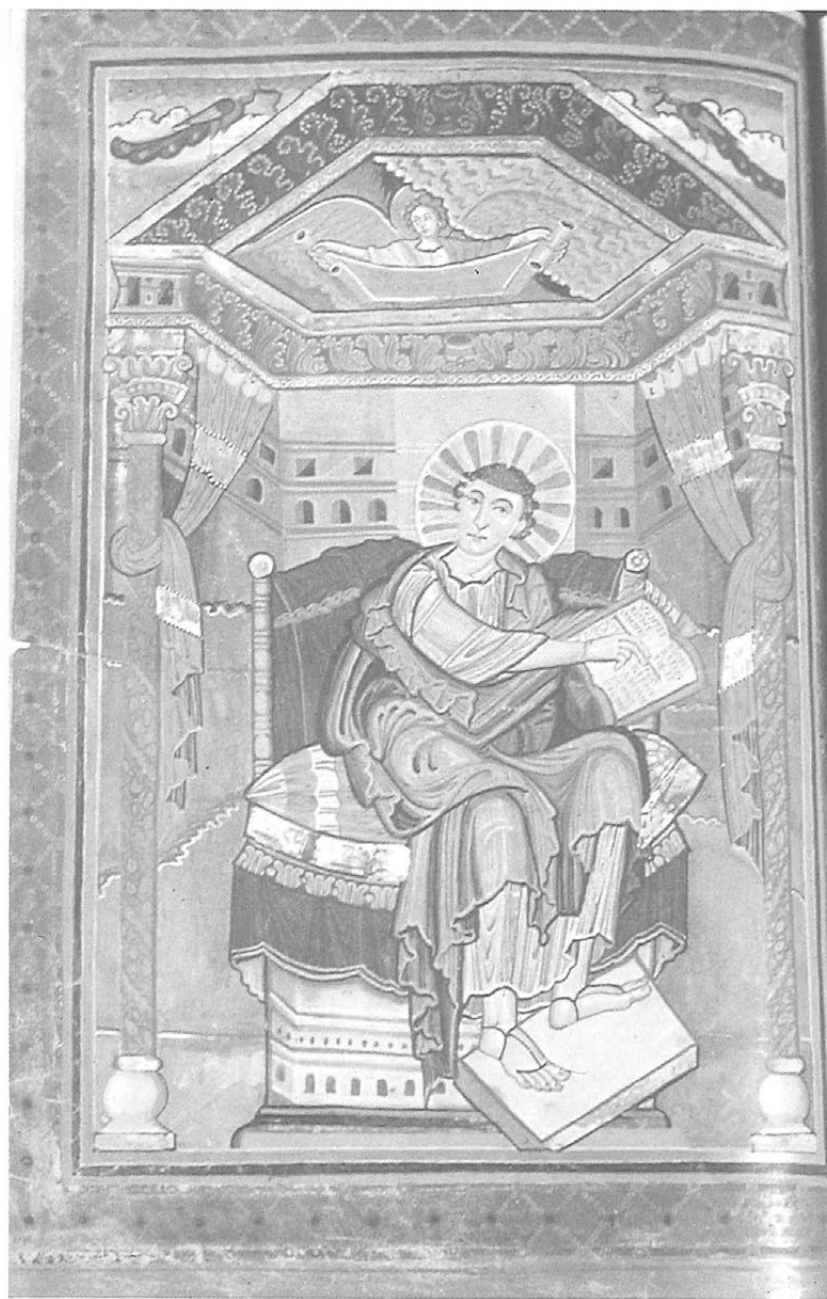


Fig. 11 MS London, BL, Harley 2788, f. 13v

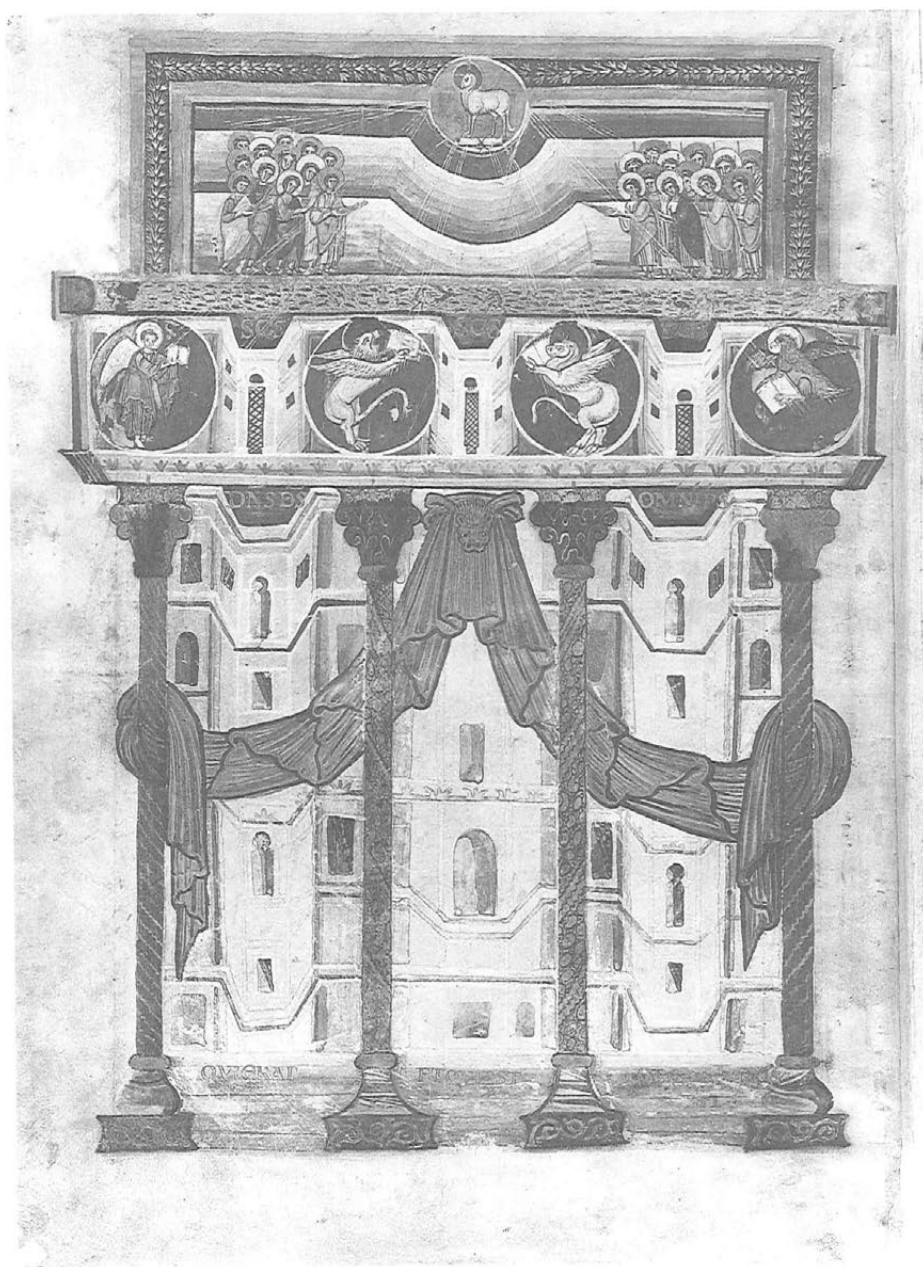


Fig. 12 MS Paris, BN, lat. 8850, f. 1v

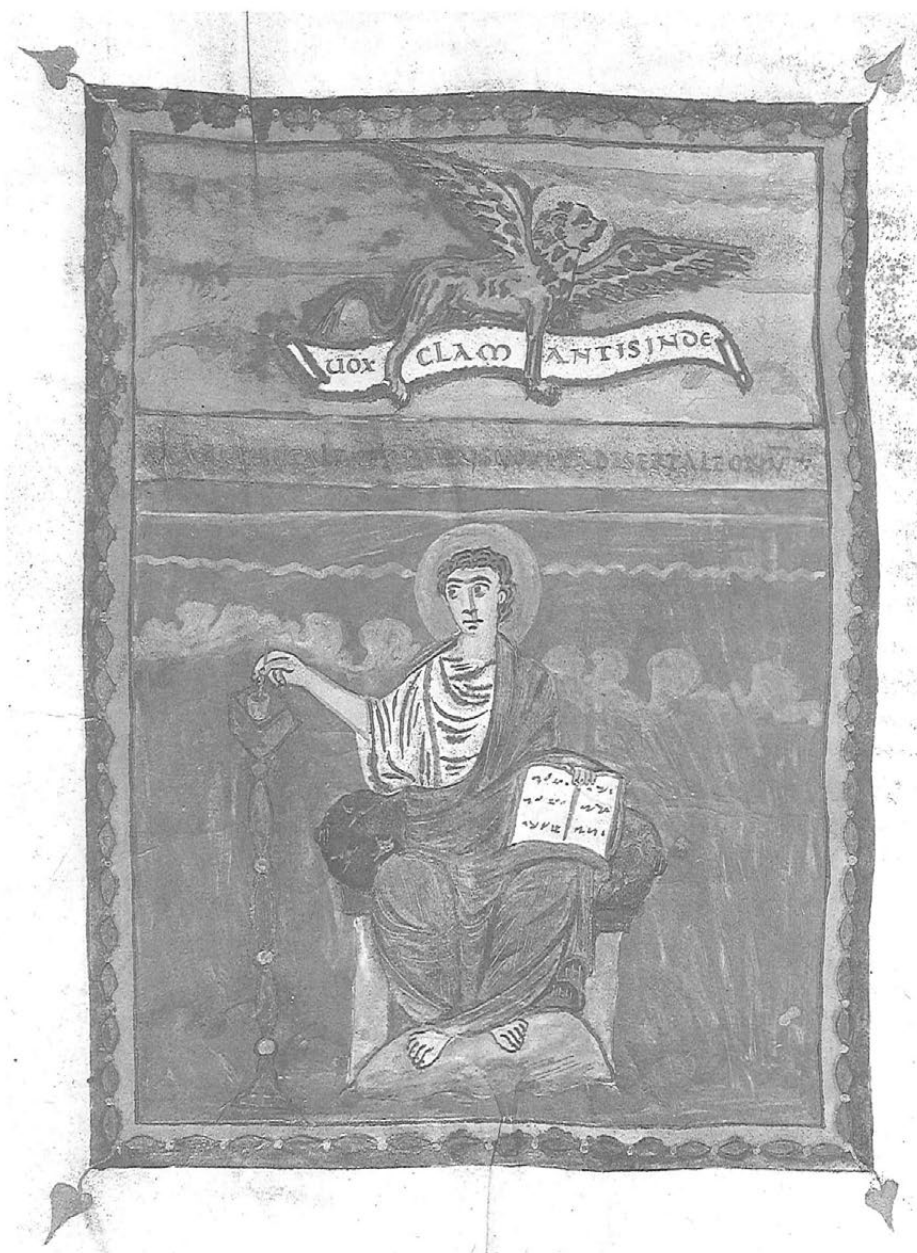


Fig. 13 MS Stuttgart, Württembergische Landesbibliothek, Cod. HB II, 40, f. 63v (see also Colour Plate 8)



Fig. 14 MS Stuttgart, Württembergische Landesbibliothek, Cod. HB II, 40, f. 146v (see also Colour Plate 9)

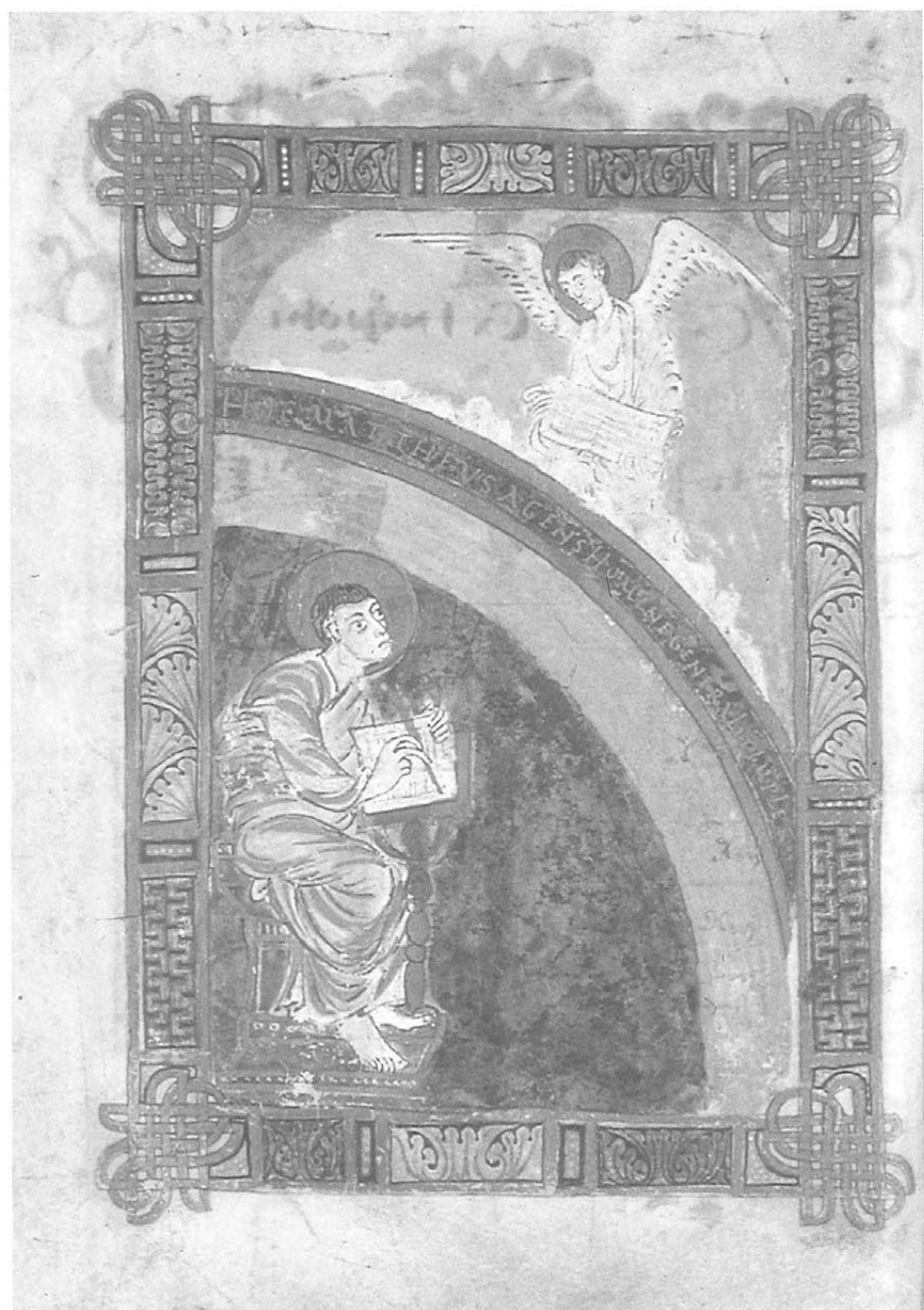


Fig. 15 MS Paris, BN, lat. 261, f. 17v (see also Colour Plate 10)

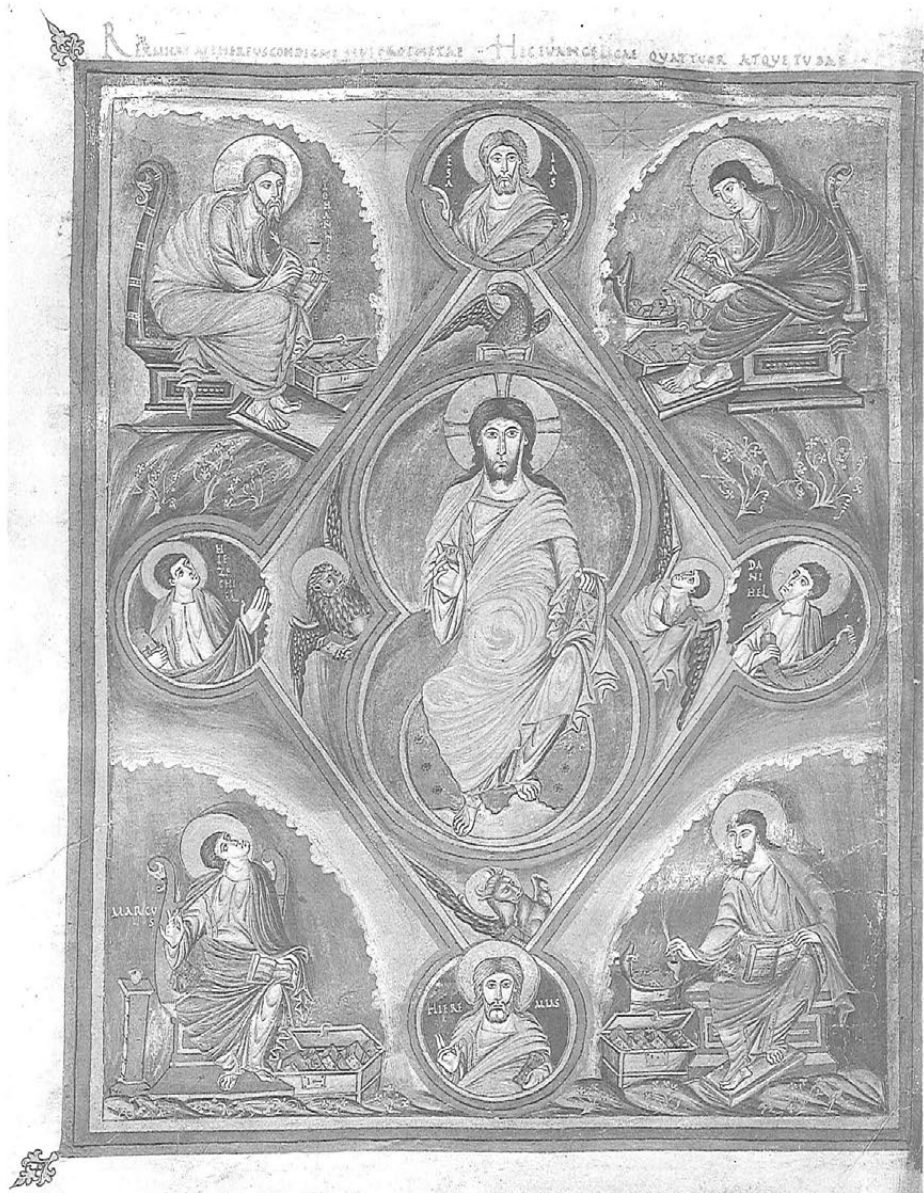


Fig. 16 MS Paris, BN, lat. 1, f. 329v



Fig. 17 MS Darmstadt, Landes- und Hochschule Bibliothek, Cod. 1640, f. 20r
(see also Colour Plate 11)



Fig. 18 MS London, BL, Add. 49598, f. 5v

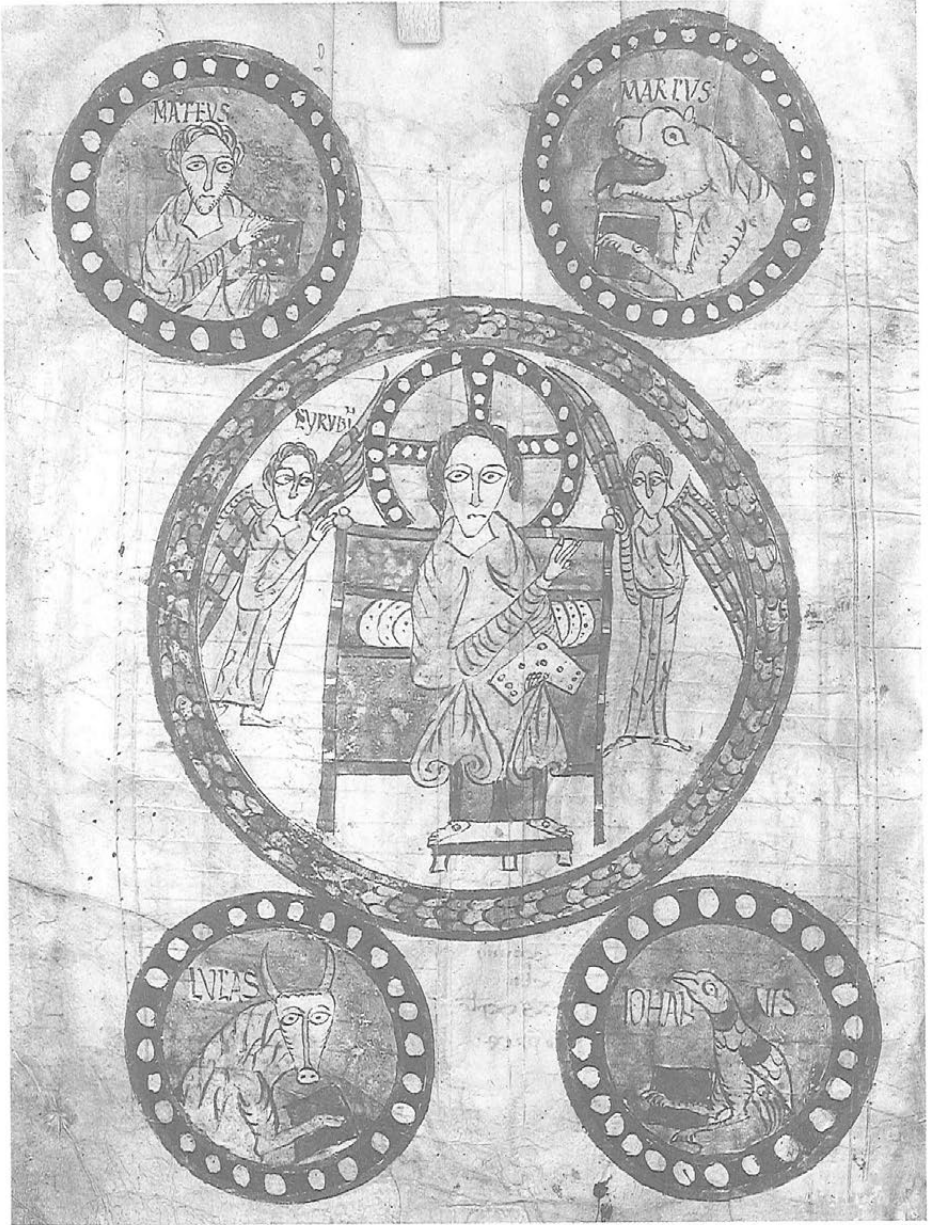


Fig. 19 MS Autun. Bibliothèque de la Ville, 3, f. 12r

Amalarius's *Liber Officialis*: Spirit and Vision in Carolingian Liturgical Thought

CELIA CHAZELLE

Until about twenty years ago, historians of the early Middle Ages tended to view Carolingian scholarly literature as characterized by a recycling of ideas and modes of expression appropriated from ancient and patristic literature and mediated, through the Carolingian works, to following centuries. One of the principal goals of analysis of these writings was to identify and elucidate their ties with presumed antecedents and exemplars. Although historians realized that important shifts in western thought occurred in the Frankish empire, they typically interpreted those changes as inadvertent, the consequence of forces outside the Carolingians' control or of their inferior skills and knowledge relative to the writers they supposedly sought to emulate.¹

Reinforcing this focus on the mediation of the past were the fixed genres to which the Carolingian texts were, and still commonly are, assigned: "the" biblical or liturgical commentary, "the" saint's life, "the" philosophical or theolo-

¹ For discussions of earlier scholarly views such as I describe, and recent departures, see C. CHAZELLE and B. VAN NAME EDWARDS, "Introduction: The study of the Bible and Carolingian culture", in: *The Study of the Bible in the Carolingian Era*, ed. C. CHAZELLE and B. VAN NAME EDWARDS (Turnhout, 2003), pp. 1-16, at pp. 6-10; J. CONTRENI, "Charlemagne and the Carolingians: The view from North America", *Cheiron: Materiali e strumenti di aggiornamento storiografico* 37 (2002), pp. 111-139, at pp. 141-153; L. NEES, *Early Medieval Art* (Oxford, 2002), pp. 9-15; J. WILLIAMS, "Introduction", in: *Imaging the Early Medieval Bible*, ed. J. WILLIAMS (University Park, PA, 1999), pp. 1-8; M. IRVINE, *The Making of Textual Culture: "Grammatica" and Literary Theory, 350-1100* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 15-22; C. CHAZELLE, "Introduction: The end of the Dark Ages", in: *Literacy, Politics, and Artistic Innovation in the Early Medieval West*, ed. C. CHAZELLE (Lanham, MD, 1992), pp. 1-18.

gical tract, “the” mirror of a prince, and so on. Often these categories are traced back to antiquity and forward to the later Middle Ages, with the Carolingian literature discussed as evidence of stages more or less midway in a long-term process of evolution. There is no question this research has borne important fruit for understanding the relation of the Carolingian writings to earlier and subsequent developments.² Still, by their nature such approaches privilege continuities, the features that mark a text as comparable to previous or later work and a channel in the transmission of older ideas. Even when the departures from earlier texts identified with the same genres are acknowledged, continuities define the matrix within which the deviations are assessed and their significance evaluated.

In the last two decades, greater regard has been shown for the substantial evidence that, while certainly mindful of patristic and other authorities, Carolingian scholars often in fact selected and adapted materials from these sources in ways that led them to break with previous trends in thought.³ Despite, however, this increased sensitivity to the disjunctions between pre-Carolingian and Carolingian learning, the literary categories used in our research continue to limit the comparisons we make with earlier and later writings and the judgments we reach on that basis concerning the Carolingian works’ typical or extraordinary features. The fluidity of textual approaches in this era – the creation, over and over again, of both new ideas and fundamentally new literary forms for their expression – has received too little examination, and as a result the complexity, originality, and scope of Carolingian intellectual endeavour remains to some extent, even now, inadequately appreciated. Meanwhile, historians of later medieval Europe still refer to older theories about early medieval thought as they trace late medieval theological, exegetical, and other scholarship back to supposedly simpler, less sophisticated Carolingian prototypes, or to antiquity mediated through uncomprehending Carolingian agents.

² Exemplary of the benefits are U. ERNST, *Carmen figuratum: Geschichte des Figurengedichts von den antiken Ursprüngen bis zum Ausgang des Mittelalters* (Cologne, 1991); J. MARENBOON, *Early Medieval Philosophy (480-1150)*, 2nd edn. (London, 1988); H.H. ANTON, *Fürstenspiegel und Herrscherethos in der Karolingerzeit* (Bonn, 1967); E. KANTOROWICZ, *Laudes Regiae: A Study in Liturgical Acclamations and Mediaeval Ruler Worship* (Berkeley, 1946).

³ See J. CONTRENI, “The Carolingian Renaissance: Education and literary culture”, in: *The New Cambridge Medieval History*, 2, c. 700-c. 900 (henceforth *NCMH* 2), ed. R. MCKITTERICK (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 709-757, esp. 747-757; D. GANZ, “Theology and the organization of thought”, in: *NCMH* 2, pp. 758-785; C. CHAZELLE, “Originality in arts and letters”, in: *Dictionary of the Middle Ages: Supplement 1*, ed. W.C. JORDAN (New York, 2003), pp. 437-439.

Any Carolingian materials that do not fit into these paradigms are (understandably) ignored.

Studies of the *Liber officialis* illustrate the historiographical methods and problems just outlined. Written by the Carolingian scholar Amalarius († ca. 851), sometimes known as “of Metz”, this is the most detailed exegetical treatment of the liturgy to survive in early medieval Latin literature.⁴ In its final (third) complete edition (abbreviated editions were also compiled), the treatise consists of four books of predominantly allegorical commentary on the major calendrical observances of the liturgical year, the daily mass, and the divine office. Not only spoken and sung texts, but ritual actions, objects, clerical grades, vestments, and other topics are discussed.⁵ Amalarius, whose traditional connection with Metz is unproven, served as archbishop of Trier from 809 to 813 or 816; he lost the position just before or after his trip to Constantinople in 813-814 as an ambassador for Charlemagne. From then until 835, aside from participating in the Paris synod of 825 that discussed Byzantine iconoclasm, most of his known career was spent in the study and composition of liturgical texts, mainly commentaries.⁶ The first edition of the *Liber officialis* was dedicated to Emperor Louis the Pious († 840) in the early 820s; the third edition was finished by ca. 835, when Amalarius was named to administer the cathedral of Lyons in the absence of its archbishop Agobard († 840), expelled for his support of Louis's sons in the rebellion of 833.⁷ Soon after arriving in Lyons, Amalarius preached his interpretations of the liturgy to the clergy; arranged for the *Liber officialis* to be copied; and called for usage of an antiphonary, no

⁴ *Amalarii episcopi opera liturgica omnia*, ed. J.-M. HANSSENS, 3 vols. (Vatican, 1948-1950: *Studi e testi* 138-140) [henceforth cited as *Amalarii opera*], 2.

⁵ See *Amalarii opera* 1, pp. 155-156, on the contents of the three editions.

⁶ Wolfgang STECK, *Der liturgiker Amalarius: Eine quellenkritische Untersuchung zu Leben und Werke eines Theologen der Karolingerzeit* (St. Ottilien, 2000), pp. 7-11 on Amalarius's biography. Most of Amalarius's extant writings were edited in *Amalarii opera*. Amalarius's *Uersus Marini*, recalling his trip to Constantinople, is edited in: *Poetae Latini aevi Carolini* (I), ed. E. DÜMMLER (Berlin, 1881: *MGH PP* 1), pp. 426-428. Recently discovered works are published in C.A. JONES, *A Lost Work by Amalarius of Metz: Interpolations in Salisbury, Cathedral Library, MS. 154* (London, 2001) and in H. SCHNEIDER, “Roman liturgy and Frankish allegory: Editions of fragments of Amalarius”, in: *Early Medieval Rome and the Christian West: Essays in Honour of Donald A. Bullough*, ed. J.M.H. SMITH (Leiden, 2000), pp. 341-379.

⁷ STECK, *Der liturgiker Amalarius*, p. 9; E. BOSHOF, *Erzbischof Agobard von Lyon: Leben und Werk* (Cologne, 1969), pp. 262-263. The first edition of the *Liber officialis* [henceforth *LO*] contained Books 1-3 and four letters; the fourth book, new prefaces, and two more letters were added to the second and third editions. See HANSSENS, *Amalarii opera* 1, pp. 68-75, 134; JONES, *A Lost Work*, p. 18 and n. 12.

longer extant, that he had compiled after visiting Rome in 831.⁸ Florus of Lyons († ca. 860), aided by Agobard, launched a campaign against Amalarius's teachings and books that led to their condemnation at the synod of Quierzy in 838, for which Florus wrote the sole surviving report.⁹ The judgment does not seem to have much dampened the popularity of the *Liber officialis* in Carolingian circles.¹⁰

Since the publication in 1948-1950 of Jean-Michel Hanssens' critical edition of Amalarius's liturgical writings,¹¹ a notable volume of scholarship on the *Liber officialis* has helped situate it within the evolution of early medieval Latin liturgical commentary, largely by comparing it with older and contemporary texts identified with the same genre.¹² Certain historians, observing that Amalarius was not the first Latin writer to undertake a comprehensive study of the liturgy or to be interested in its allegorical interpretation, have stressed the connections between his work, especially the *Liber officialis*, and earlier exegesis.¹³ A greater number of scholars, though, while not denying these connections, have paid more attention to the ways in which Amalarius's treatise seems to depart from both previous and other Carolingian writings of this genre. The amount of emphasis on allegorical interpretation; the number of different liturgical elements discussed in this fashion; the perplexing order in which some

⁸ Hanssens published what he argued to be the antiphonary's prologue: *Prologus antiphonarii, Amalarii opera* 1, pp. 359-363. Cf. STECK, *Der liturgiker Amalarius*, pp. 9, 159-162; JONES, *A Lost Work*, pp. 56-57 and n. 22.

⁹ *Conc. Carisiac.*, ed. in: *Concilia aevi Karolini*, ed. A. WERMINGHOFF, 2 vols. (Hannover, 1906-1908: MGH CONC 2.1-2), 2, pp. 768-782. See K. ZECHIEL-ECKES, *Florus von Lyon als Kirchenpolitiker und Publizist: Studien zur Persönlichkeit eines karolingischen "Intellektuellen" am Beispiel der Auseinandersetzung mit Amalarius (835-838) und des Prädestinationsstreits (851-855)* (Stuttgart, 1999), pp. 21-22, 27-34, 54-59.

¹⁰ See below, at n. 109.

¹¹ Above, n. 4.

¹² Surveys of earlier scholarship on Amalarius are found in P.G. FERRIBY, *The Development of Liturgical Symbolism in the Early Works of Amalarius of Metz (ca. 775-ca. 850)* (PhD dissertation, Princeton Theological Seminary, 2000), pp. 11-44; P.A. JACOBSON, *Ad memoriam ducens: The Development of Liturgical Exegesis in Amalar of Metz's Expositiones missae* (PhD dissertation, Graduate Theological Union, 1996), pp. 4-10.

¹³ E.g. R. SUNTRUP, *Die Bedeutung der liturgischen Gebärden und Bewegungen in lateinischen und deutschen Auslegungen des 9. bis 13. Jahrhunderts* (Munich, 1978), pp. 46-49; A. FRANZ, *Die Messe im deutschen Mittelalter: Beiträge zur Geschichte der Liturgie und des religiösen Volkslebens* (Freiburg in Breisgau, 1902; repr. Darmstadt, 1963), pp. 361-362 (linking Amalarius with Alcuin); A. KOLPING, "Amalar von Metz und Florus von Lyon: Zeugen eines Wandels im liturgischen Mysterienverständnis in der Karolingerzeit", *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 73 (1951), pp. 424-464, at pp. 424-425; J.A. JUNGSMANN, *The Mass of the Roman Rite*, 2 vols. (New York, 1950), 1, p. 88.

portions of the commentary are presented;¹⁴ its prolix, discursive, associative prose style; the frequent lack of identifiable precedents or sources and the failure to note them for many teachings – all these features make the *Liber officialis* appear exceptional relative to other early medieval Latin liturgical commentaries.¹⁵ Even more striking, it is thought, is Amalarius's openness about admitting that his treatise breaks new ground. Regularly in the *Liber officialis*, he announces that he discovered ideas in his own mind or soul or acquired them, not from the church fathers, but from the Holy Spirit.¹⁶ Although the actual innovation of much Carolingian scholarship is now well recognized, such comments are still usually taken as indicative of an audaciousness – an altogether different mentality from the expressions of respect for patristic and church tradition that so frequently occur in contemporary writings.

These characteristics of the *Liber officialis* have encouraged some historians to judge its exegesis “extreme”, “absurd”, and marginal in the development of Carolingian learning.¹⁷ Sometimes, its isolation from supposedly

¹⁴ At various points Amalarius notes that he has chosen to comment on a portion of the liturgy he forgot to mention elsewhere, where it would have been more logical to do so, or that he is presenting new thoughts about a liturgical element on which he had already commented in a previous chapter: e.g. *LO* 1. 41, *Amalarii opera* 2, pp. 192–193, *LO* 3. 39, *Amalarii opera* 2, p. 373; *LO* 4 *Praefatiuncula* 2, *Amalarii opera* 2, p. 403. See HANSSSENS, *Amalarii opera* 1, pp. 135–136.

¹⁵ Most often mentioned to illustrate this point are the treatise assigned to Germanus of Paris, *Quomodo solemniter ordo ecclesiae agitur*, ed. K. GAMBER, *Ordo Antiquus Gallicanus: Der gallikanische Messritus des 6. Jahrhunderts* (Regensburg, 1965); Isidore, *De ecclesiasticis officiis*, ed. C.M. LAWSON (Turnhout, 1989: CCL 113); Rabanus, *De institutione clericorum libri tres*, ed. D. ZIMPEL (Frankfurt, 1996); Walafrid Strabo, *Libellus de exordiis et incrementis quarundam in observationibus ecclesiasticis rerum*, ed. V. KRAUSE in: *Capitularia regum Francorum*, 2, ed. A. BORETIUS and V. KRAUSE (Hannover, 1890–1897: MGH CAPP 2), pp. 473–516; and the various Carolingian expositions of baptism and commentaries on the mass. See JONES, *A Lost Work*, pp. 140–144; JACOBSON, “*Ad memoriam ducens*”, pp. 1–2, with references to earlier literature; R. MESSNER, “Zur Hermeneutik allegorischer Liturgieerklärung in Ost und West”, *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 115 (1993), pp. 284–319 and 415–434, esp. pp. 285, 415; P. ROREM, *The Medieval Development of Liturgical Symbolism* (Nottingham, 1986), p. 21.

¹⁶ Most discussions of Amalarius refer to this: e.g. (as a few examples) JONES, *A Lost Work*, p. 142; E. BOSHOF, *Ludwig der Fromme* (Darmstadt, 1996), pp. 238–239; A. CABANISS, *Amalarius of Metz* (Amsterdam, 1954), pp. 96–101; D.L. MOSEY, *Allegorical liturgical interpretation in the West from 800 A.D. to 1200 A.D.* (PhD diss., University of St. Michael's College, Toronto, 1985), pp. 50, 75–77; ROREM, *Medieval Development*, p. 25.

¹⁷ See, e.g. Y. HEN, *Culture and Religion in Merovingian Gaul, A.D. 481–751* (Leiden, 1995), p. 76; J. PELIKAN, *The Growth of Medieval Theology (600–1300)* (Chicago, 1978), p. 79; R. MCKITTERICK, *The Frankish Church and the Carolingian Reforms 789–987* (London, 1977), p. 148, and see pp. 148–153; E. BOSHOF, *Erzbischof Agobard von Lyon: Leben und Werk* (Cologne, 1969), p. 284.

dominant trends in this period and region is ascribed to Amalarius's exposure to Greek ideas and practices in Constantinople. Early Byzantine commentators on the liturgy stressed allegorical interpretation, and certain meanings they assigned to elements of the liturgy recur in the *Liber officialis* and other treatises by Amalarius.¹⁸ As Christopher Jones has recently remarked, though, Amalarius does not cite any of the major Greek liturgical commentaries of the ninth or earlier centuries.¹⁹ While I think conversations with bilingual clergy at the imperial court and his witness of the Byzantine liturgy likely had some influence on his thinking, the impact of Latin sources available in his homeland is more noticeable. Jones has linked the *Liber officialis* with several currents in Carolingian philosophical, theological, and biblical studies, in particular contemporary exegesis of scripture. The *Liber officialis*, he demonstrates, treats the entire liturgy as a book to which can be applied exegetical approaches with some parallels to those of ninth-century biblical commentaries.²⁰

Jones' analyses of the *Liber officialis* have significantly advanced our understanding of the treatise and its place in the development of early medieval interpretation of the liturgy. Yet problems remain, since (having different aims than I do here) he does not give close consideration to precisely those attributes that led other scholars to see the *Liber officialis* as exceptionally daring and hence marginal in Carolingian culture. There are definite connections with contemporary scriptural exegesis, particularly with the principle of exhaustive analysis of every detail of the "text" at hand, in this case the liturgy. But Amalarius's methods of exegesis – the discursive prose of the *Liber officialis*, the apparent interruptions to the logical order of its commentary, the emphasis on allegory – cannot be entirely explained by reference to the methods of most Carolingian treatises on the Bible. In general, ninth-century Latin exegesis of scripture proceeds more methodically, indeed sometimes rather pedantically, scriptural verse by scriptural verse and chapter by chapter, carefully adhering to the Bible's organization, and in many cases with more attention to literal or historical than allegorical interpretation. The lack of patristic precedent for much of the discussion in the *Liber officialis*, and Amalarius's repeated assertions that many of his ideas came from the Spirit or were discovered in his own mind, also seem at odds with the frequent, heavy reliance on patristic

¹⁸ See FERRIBY, "Development of liturgical symbolism", pp. 1-2; ROREM, *Medieval Development*, p. 25.

¹⁹ JONES, *A Lost Work*, pp. 141-142.

²⁰ See JONES, *A Lost Work*, pp. 141-153; ID., "The book of the liturgy in Anglo-Saxon England", *Speculum* 73 (1998), pp. 659-702, at pp. 659-666, 674-675.

material in biblical commentaries, and with their authors' statements that their intention was simply to collect and transmit the wisdom of the church fathers.²¹

My principal aim in this essay is to try to clarify these apparent peculiarities of the *Liber officialis* by setting the work against the backdrop of another arena of early medieval intellectual activity beyond those so far mentioned: the practice, rooted in monasticism, of ruminative meditation.²² Meditation is an arena that overlaps considerably with the Carolingian interest in biblical and liturgical commentary, not only Amalarius's text, but its complex relation to those forms of scholarly endeavour is rarely discussed. One result of this neglect, it seems to me, is that our overall understanding of Carolingian exegesis, of scripture and the liturgy, is generally somewhat distorted.

Monastic rules, commentaries on rules, saints' lives, and other literature make clear the importance of meditation in the devotional life of early medieval monks and clergy. Not only did they read scripture, hear it read, and read literature that might help them understand its meaning; they were expected to ponder its message on their own, drawing on the knowledge gained from those varied sources. As the Rule of St. Benedict leaves no doubt, study and meditation, *lectio* and *meditatio*, in tension yet complimentary, were the two poles of the monastic life, the former pole supporting the latter.²³

The insights that arose from meditation were not considered original as we understand originality, since the Holy Spirit was believed to direct the mind along the path of orthodoxy laid out in scripture.²⁴ Yet this process of "sacral

²¹ See CHAZELLE and VANNAME EDWARDS, "Study of the Bible and Carolingian culture", pp. 10-12, and the other articles in the same volume; CONTRENI, "Carolingian Renaissance", pp. 733-734.

²² The meditative quality of *LO* is briefly noted by JONES, *A Lost Work*, p. 6, but not discussed in depth.

²³ *Regula sancti Benedicti*, esp. c. 48; J. LECLERCQ, *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God: A Study of Monastic Culture*, 3rd edn. (New York, 1982), pp. 12-17, 58-88; MCGINN, *The Growth of Mysticism: Gregory the Great through the 12th Century* (New York, 1994), pp. 132-146.

²⁴ M. CARRUTHERS, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 162-173. The relation of *lectio* and *meditatio* to orthodoxy, even in those with limited education, is evoked in the *Vita Sturm*. Though he had a teacher, the priest Wigbert, Sturm is represented as essentially self-taught. "After he had learned the psalms by heart and mastered many books by repeatedly going over them in his mind, the boy began to understand the spiritual meaning of the Scriptures and set himself to learn the hidden secrets of the four Gospels of Christ, and, as far as he was able, to fix in his mind by continual reading the Old and New Testaments. His meditation was upon the law of God, as Scripture says, night and day. His understanding was profound, his thoughts full of wisdom, his words of prudence" (Egil, *The Life of Saint Sturm*, tr. C.H. TALBOT, in: *Soldiers of Christ: Saints and Saints' Lives from Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, ed. T.F.X. NOBLE and T. HEAD (University Park, PA,

ized thought” was certainly valued as creative. Biblical verses and ideas the mind had acquired from other texts elucidating biblical doctrine, such as its patristic exegesis, were supposedly “invented” or recalled into memory. Aided by the Spirit, it was believed, the mind moved freely among these recollections or back and forth between previously learned information and the acquisitions of new reading. Brought together into new combinations and arrangements, this knowledge became the building material from which it gradually constructed a more elevated grasp of sacred truth, one that remained cognizant of the Bible’s literal or historical sense but explored, as fully as possible, its more hidden, moral (tropological) or anagogical meanings.²⁵ Other activities involving corporeal sense perception, too, besides the direct study of sacred literature – though on this point Amalarius disagreed with Florus and Agobard – were widely assumed to induce memory of scripture’s teachings and inspire inner contemplation of heavenly things. These included the seeing of works of art, pilgrimages to holy places and saints’ shrines, and the liturgy.²⁶ The insights

1995), pp. 165–187, at pp. 167–168). For an exceptionally beautiful expression of similar ideas, from the eastern Mediterranean, see *A Letter of Philoxenus of Mabbug Sent to a Friend*, tr. G. OLINDER (Göteborg, 1950), pp. 14–15. My thanks to Peter Brown for this reference.

²⁵ I am very grateful to Peter Brown for clarifying this (oral communication) and suggesting the descriptive term ‘sacralized thought’. Compare M. CARRUTHERS, *The Craft of Thought: Meditation, Rhetoric, and the Making of Images, 400–1200* (Cambridge, 1998); R. FULTON, *From Judgment to Passion: Devotion to Christ and the Virgin Mary, 800–1200* (New York, 2002), 155–170; J. LECLERCQ, *Otia monastica: Études sur le vocabulaire de la contemplation au moyen âge* (Rome, 1963), esp. pp. 63–83. The integration of patristic writings into meditative thought, so that the language of the Fathers can become the inner language of meditation and prayer, is well illustrated in the *Praefatio* of Julian of Toledo’s *Prognosticorum futuri saeculi* (Julian, *Opera*, ed. J.N. HILLGARTH (Turnhout, 1976: CCSL 115), p. 14); see P. BROWN, *The Rise of Western Christendom: Triumph and Diversity, A.D. 200–1000*, 2nd edn. (Oxford, 2003), p. 26.

²⁶ CARRUTHERS, *Craft of Thought*, pp. 42–44, 61, 266–268; LECLERCQ, *Love of Learning*, pp. 236–254. The focus seems to be sight and hearing; both were conceived as feeding into meditation or contemplative vision, even while the corporeal and inner activities are clearly differentiated. See D. APPLEBY, “The priority of sight according to Peter the Venerable”, *Mediaeval Studies* 60 (1998), pp. 123–157, at pp. 145–149; and the discussion of Bernard of Clairvaux in Bernard MCGINN, *The Growth of Mysticism*, p. 187. On the assimilation of words/hearing to sights/seeing and the roots in classical comparisons of painting to language, see also K.F. MORRISON, “*I Am You*”: *The Hermeneutics of Empathy in Western Literature, Theology, and Art* (Princeton, 1988), pp. 63–66, 270–295. On spiritual seeing and its relation to corporeal, in connection with artistic imagery, see H.L. KESSLER, “Real absence: Early medieval art and the metamorphosis of vision”, in *Morfologie sociali e culturali in Europa fra tarda antichità e alto medioevo*, 2 vols. (Spoleto, 1998: *Atti delle Settimane di Studio del Centro Italiano di Studi sull’Alto Medioevo* 45), 2, pp. 1157–1211 and Plates, reprinted in ID., *Spiritual Seeing: Picturing God’s Invisibility in Medieval Art* (Philadelphia, 2000), pp. 104–148.

formed by means of such activities or by biblical studies were emotional as well as intellectual, encompassing not only doctrinal insights but heightened feelings of fear of and love for God or contrition for one's sins.²⁷

Although other Carolingian writers besides Amalarius gave thought to the theoretical relation between study of the Bible or other literature and meditative contemplation,²⁸ historians have shown little interest in what the traditions of meditation may mean for understanding the dynamics of Carolingian exegesis, the eighth- and ninth-century writings that have probably most suffered, in modern assessments, from the view that their authors were uninterested in intellectual originality.²⁹ I cannot explore this issue at length here. Still, it is important for evaluating the *Liber officialis* to keep in mind the broad-reaching desire among Carolingian monks and clergy to meditate on Christian dogma and aid others to do the same, to move from the "letter" of scripture and sources that might shed light on its contents toward fuller comprehension of the infinite wealth of its wisdom.

A few Carolingian treatises of biblical commentary show the influence of this goal on their exegetical approach. In the commentaries of Paschasius Radbertus, for example with whom Amalarius must have interacted during his stay at Corbie in the early 830s, borrowings from the fathers are interwoven with Radbertus's own words into discursive streams of thought that go beyond the teachings of the sources cited in order to stress the possibility of the soul's conversion to the mystical ascent toward God.³⁰ In other Carolingian exegetical

²⁷ See FULTON, *From Judgment to Passion*, pp. 155-157. The discussion refers to the *Opusculum de passione Domini* ascribed to Rabanus Maurus (ed. in: *PL* 112, cols. 1425-1430). The attribution is problematic, but this does not diminish the value of Fulton's subtle account of meditative practice.

²⁸ E.g. Alcuin's *Disputatio de vera philosophia*, ed. in: *PL* 101, cols. 849-854; see M. ALBERI, "The better paths of wisdom: Alcuin's monastic 'true philosophy' and the worldly court", *Speculum* 76 (2001), pp. 896-910, esp. pp. 900-904. Similar concerns, though with a different conception of the role of scriptural studies, are evident from the *Opus Caroli regis* or *Libri Carolini*: Theodulf of Orléans, *Opus Caroli Regis contra Synodum (Libri Carolini)*, ed. A. FREEMAN (Hannover, 1998: *MGH CONC* 2, *Supplementum* 1). On this treatise, notice should be taken of the recent work by A. OMMUNDSEN, "The liberal arts and the polemic strategy of the *Opus Caroli Regis Contra Synodum (Libri Carolini)*", *Symbolae Osloenses* 77 (2002), pp. 175-200.

²⁹ E.g. the classic work by B. SMALLEY, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages*, 3rd rev. edn. (Oxford, 1983). Although this book did much to inspire interest in medieval exegesis, it devotes little space to the Carolingians because of the supposedly derivative nature of their work: see pp. IX, 37-44.

³⁰ See esp. Radbertus, *Expositio in Lamentationes Hieremiae libri quinque*, ed. B. PAULUS (Turnhout, 1988: *CCCM* 85); ID., *Expositio in Psalmum XLIV*, ed. B. PAULUS (Turnhout, 1991: *CCCM* 94). Also see (using sources in a similar fashion) Hincmar of Reims, *De cavendis vitiis et*

writing, the methodology of the commentary – the more overt reliance on patristic literature, such as the direct quotations that dominate the scriptural commentaries of Rabanus Maurus – seems further removed from the principles of meditative thought.³¹ Yet no matter how dependent on the fathers a commentary appears to us, we should remember that the materials compiled in it might themselves assist the *meditatio* believed to follow from *lectio divina*. The patristic sources excerpted and arranged in such treatises, and the expositions developed from them, provided foundations for the Carolingian authors' own meditative prayer and the similar intellectual efforts of their pious readers. Against the notion that Carolingian exegetes or other scholars were uninterested in intellectual creativity, the freely formed thought of meditation, albeit rooted in scripture and the fathers and directed by the Holy Spirit, was an inextricable part of their search to understand Christian orthodoxy. Somewhat paradoxically, the practice of meditation belonged to their inherited orthodox tradition as much as did patristic literature. As such, it, too, tied them to the past and future as to the present, rendering them members of a single community that embraced not only the living faithful but earlier and later generations.

Recognition of this fundamental aspect of Carolingian piety is crucial to understanding the intellectual context in which the *Liber officialis* was written. From this perspective, Amalarius's treatise is exceptional less for the meditative processes of thought revealed there, than for the extent to which its structure and contents make them explicit. More directly and thoroughly than other early medieval liturgical commentaries, it reflects a conviction that every detail of the liturgy's textual records or of the ceremonies in which he participated might inspire meditation, and it records the results of that intellectual process.³²

virtutibus exercendis, ed. D. NACHTMANN (Munich, 1998: *MGH Quellen zur Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters* 16). My ideas about Radbertus owe a great deal to the monograph in preparation by D. APPLEBY, *Present Absence: The Monastic Humanism of Radbert of Corbie*. I am grateful to Professor Appleby for allowing me to read a draft of his study. The parallels between Radbertus's thought and that of Amalarius are also suggested by the analysis of the former in K.F. MORRISON, *The Mimetic Tradition of Reform in the West* (Princeton, 1982), pp. 121-135. On Amalarius's visit to Corbie in the early 830s, around the time that Radbertus was composing his treatise on the eucharist, see STECK, *Der liturgiker Amalarius*, pp. 8-9. One may wonder what conversations took place then between these two scholars of the liturgy.

³¹ Only one of Rabanus's commentaries has been published in a modern critical edition: *Hrabani Mauri Expositio in Mattheum*, ed. B. LÖFSTEDT, 2 vols. (Turnhout, 2000: CCCM 174-174A). His commentaries on other biblical books must be read in PL 107-112.

³² In the *praefatiuncula* to LO 1 (*Amalarii opera* 2, p. 26), Amalarius states that his exegesis is based on liturgical texts: "... *id est de officio quod continetur in sacramentario et antiphonario, quae pene omnibus rusticis nota est*". But it is also apparent he drew on recollections of his own witness of and participation in liturgical ceremony. See, e.g., concerning the *Adoratio crucis*, LO

Meditation is a critical mental activity, one of the main "sources", underlying Amalarius's written exegesis. Guided by the Holy Spirit, he believed, his mind proceeded smoothly from the thoughts produced through his corporeal experience of the liturgy's sensible facets, his reading of its texts, and his familiarity with patristic literature, to new, creative exploration of the liturgy's spiritual meaning. The knowledge gained from his meditation was then communicated to his audience, in conformity to the doctrine of both Augustine and Gregory I that those who receive insight directly from heaven should teach other faithful.³³ As already noted, it is conceivable that Amalarius's exegesis of the liturgy was influenced by his trip to Constantinople. Still, the very qualities of the *Liber officialis* seen as evidence of its marginality in Carolinian thought – the stress on allegorical interpretation, the discursive nature of the exegesis, the claims that ideas were found in Amalarius's mind or came from the Spirit – are those that best reveal its debt to traditions central to early medieval Christian devotion.

Furthermore, although the *Liber officialis* is more "meditative" in style than most of the commentaries with which it is usually linked, it is less unusual than these connections make it appear, since it breaks through the boundaries by which the genres of early medieval Latin commentary on the Bible and the liturgy are normally defined. Amalarius's work is as comparable to early medieval literature of meditative thought and prayer as to writings more commonly regarded as exegetical. Thus it invites us to be more sensitive to the fluidity of the categories to which we assign Carolingian writing, more aware of the frequency with which other authors, too, besides Amalarius, drew together modes of discourse that we have tended to identify with different literary genres.³⁴

Most striking, in my opinion, for the comparison it offers to the *Liber officialis*, is the Carolingian meditative exegesis of the Bible and the liturgy written in verse. Again, I cannot discuss this in depth, but one such work that merits

1. 14. 5-7, *Amalarii opera* 2, pp. 100-101. It is noteworthy that Walafrid Strabo implies that liturgical commentary, per se, depends primarily on spiritually inspired meditation: "*De ministris ecclesiae et ministeriis ipsorum necnon et de multiplicibus sacramentorum, officiorum et observationum rationibus multi multa dixerunt, ita ut pauca vel paene nulla remanserint, quae non iam per inlumenationem Spiritus sancti sint demonstrata, non solum qualiter debeant fieri, verum etiam quomodo singula mystice debeant vel possint intellegi diligenti examinatione discussa*" (*Libellus de exordiis et incrementis*, ed. KRAUSE, p. 475).

³³ See Augustine, *De doctrina Christiana*, Prooemium 8, ed. J. MARTIN (Turnhout, 1962: CCL 32), p. 5; Gregory, *Règle pastorale* 2. 11, ed. B. JUDIC (Paris, 1992: SC 381), pp. 252-257.

³⁴ For an excellent analysis of the treatise, *In honorem sanctae crucis* by Rabanus Maurus that explores this characteristic, see M.C. FERRARI, *Il "Liber sanctae crucis" di Rabano Mauro: Testo – immagine – contesto* (Bern, 1999).

notice here is the *In honorem sanctae crucis*, the collection of *carmina figurata* honouring the cross completed by Rabanus Maurus in 813 or 814.³⁵ Like Amalarius's treatise, this is a complex work that can be analyzed from several angles and does not fully conform to any previously attested literary genre;³⁶ but what is significant for my purposes is that it presents a series of meditative expositions, in verse, inspired by the liturgy of the cross, particularly the *Adoratio crucis* of Good Friday.³⁷ As Rabanus praises and contemplates the cross and its cruciform shape (and therefore representations of the cross), his thoughts are led toward new understanding of their spiritual meaning. Both the verses and the figure or image of each *carmen figuratum* set forth his insights. While based on scripture and its patristic interpretation as well as on the liturgy of the cross, the language moves beyond the specific contents of any of Rabanus's sources. A more systematically organized *declaratio figurae* or prose explanation of each poem with discussion of its figure appears on the opposite page. The liturgical focus of the *In honorem sanctae crucis* is narrower than that of the *Liber officialis*. But the two treatises are similar insofar as Rabanus' collection, too, is a work of exegesis that starts from study of the liturgy together with the Bible and patristic literature, yet also depends on its Carolingian author's spiritually directed meditation on the allegorical significance of a material component of church ceremonial. In one sense, indeed, his treatise is as comprehensive as the *Liber officialis*, since it implies that the church's entire worship of God, and therefore every liturgical ceremony, is synonymous with the cross's adoration.³⁸

The Liber officialis As Meditational Tract

In order to understand the ideas to which Amalarius's meditation in the *Liber officialis* leads him, it is important to be aware of the optimistic cosmology, showing affinities with an Augustinianism filtered through Gregorian thought, that his teachings seem to reflect.³⁹ In this respect too, as I will discuss

³⁵ Rabanus, *In honorem sanctae crucis*, ed. M. PERRIN (Turnhout, 1997: CCCM 100); tr. M. PERRIN, *Raban Maur, Louanges de la Sainte Croix* (Paris, 1988).

³⁶ See above, n. 34.

³⁷ See *In honorem s. crucis*, *Carmen* 28, B 28.

³⁸ For this theme, esp. Rabanus, *Carmen* 28, B 28, C 28 (= *declaratio figurae*), D 28 (= Rabanus's prose rendition of the poetry).

³⁹ Carole Straw's eloquent description of Gregory's theology can be applied to Amalarius, as well: "Gregory sees the universe as an ontological continuum, flowing from pure spirituality to pure carnality. Spiritual and carnal are antithetical as are beauty and deformity, permanence

further later, Amalarius was not isolated in Carolingian intellectual circles, even though not all contemporary theologians shared the same perspective. For him, it appears, the mundane and the spiritual, though opposites, belong to an essentially continuous spectrum. The boundary between them is not sharply defined, so that the spiritual is much more diffused within the perceptible, temporal realm of the liturgy than is true for Florus or Agobard of Lyons. Any feature of the liturgy can, in principle, manifest the blessing that makes the Holy Spirit present in and through the liturgy as a whole, as long as a given feature is recorded in "authentic" documents and consequently possesses reason or a rationale (*ratio*), a quality that renders it a reflection of God, the *summa ratio*.⁴⁰ For Amalarius, the authentic texts of the liturgy include recent as well as ancient records of its words and ceremonial; in them, God has blessed not only those words taken directly from the Bible or specific liturgical actions traceable to scripture, such as baptism and the eucharist's consecration, but potentially every recorded detail: vestments, gestures, personnel, music, and others. Any facet of an ancient or contemporary ritual can be owed to "Christian industry" and, as something ordained by God, be open to mystical interpretation.⁴¹ Although Amalarius recognizes that the rites of individual churches and regions can differ and have altered over time, his references to this variability do not imply condemnation.⁴² Despite the liturgy's variety, it appears, all of it is, potentially, divinely sanctioned – a notion, it will be seen, not shared by Amalarius's opponents. The Spirit's omnipresence in the diverse ceremonies of churches, as through the tongues of flame that enabled the apostles to speak different languages, is a manifestation of divine and ecclesiastical unity.⁴³

and change; but an underlying continuity unites them in the same order of comparison as complementary opposites. A mysterious unity of paradox and complementarity replaces the simpler unity of happier times in paradise" (C. STRAW, *Gregory the Great: Perfection in Imperfection* (Berkeley, 1988), p. 30). Compared with Augustine, both Cassian and Gregory were more willing to perceive meditative contemplation and prayer as growing smoothly out of *lectio*. They 'telescope' the interval between *lectio* and *meditatio* and thus understand contemplation as a more easily attained level of thought, though differentiated from the true vision of God. See R. MARKUS, *The End of Ancient Christianity* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 181-197.

⁴⁰ *Epistula Amalarii ad Petrum abbatem Nonantulanum* 4-6, *Amalarii opera* 1, pp. 229-231, at p. 230. See JONES, *A Lost Work*, pp. 46, 62-64.

⁴¹ *Epistula Amalarii ad Petrum* 4-5, *Amalarii opera* 1, p. 230.

⁴² See *LO Prooem.* 2, *Amalarii opera* 2, p. 13; *LO Praefatio* 1, *Amalarii opera* 2, p. 19; *LO* 3, *Praefat.*, *Amalarii opera* 2, p. 257.

⁴³ *LO* 1. 40, *Amalarii opera* 2, pp. 188-189.

Also suggestive of the same cosmological perspective is Amalarius's apparent assumption that, when the mind or soul adheres to the Holy Spirit, bodily sense experience can be a starting point for acquiring knowledge of the spiritual truths the liturgy signifies. The continuity of mundane and sacred within the cosmos is in a sense replicated in the individual Christian, in whom, at least when studying, witnessing, or participating in the liturgy, thoughts based on physical perception may flow into comprehension of heavenly things. Sense experience, in these contexts, opens a path to spiritual insight. As Amalarius follows this path, the Spirit assures the correctness of his exegesis, even though he often has no patristic precedent for his interpretations. His sinful nature limits his understanding, he admits,⁴⁴ yet all his teachings agree with scripture and the fathers and are therefore orthodox, so long as he adheres to the one Spirit of God potentially operative in and through every element of the liturgy.⁴⁵

Although Amalarius's short preface (*praefatiuncula*) for Book 1 of the *Liber officialis* presents some difficulties of interpretation, it offers his most extensive analysis of the meditative process underpinning his exegesis.⁴⁶ The preface thus fulfils several possible objectives: it clarifies the intellectual route by which Amalarius believed that he arrived at the ideas set out in the subsequent chapters; it presents a guide to how, using the *Liber officialis* as a model and inspiration, the reader's own meditation on the liturgy may proceed; and, by confirming the Holy Spirit's influence on Amalarius and his desire to obey God's will, it provides evidence of his commentary's legitimacy. The section opens with an analysis of Mt 7, 12 ("All things whatsoever you would that men should do to you, do you also to them") and of the distinction between will (*uoluntas*) and desire (*cupiditas*) based on either Augustine's *De civitate Dei* or his *De sermone Domini in monte*, both works known in ninth-century Carolingian circles.⁴⁷ That Amalarius starts his treatise with scripture and a

⁴⁴ LO 1, *Praefatiuncula* 3, *Amalarii opera* 2, p. 26.

⁴⁵ Compare LO Prooem. 6, *Amalarii opera* 2, p. 14; LO Praefatio 2-5, *Amalarii opera* 2, pp. 19-21; LO 3, *Praefatiuncula*, *Amalarii opera* 2, p. 257.

⁴⁶ LO Praefatiuncula, *Amalarii opera* 2, pp. 25-26.

⁴⁷ "Ubi sanctus Agustinus [sic] exponit evangelium illud: 'Omnia ergo quaecumque vultis ut faciant vobis homines, et vos facite eis', voluntatem separat a cupiditate, voluntatem ponit in bono, cupiditatem in malo. Non enim convenit ut quodcumque malus vult fieri sibi, hoc possit ex auctoritate evangelica praesentis loci in alium libere perpetrare. Verbi gratia, ut si ego ganeo cupio inebriari, aut nimis saturari ab alio, non oportet ut id libere in ceteris agam, sed quodcumque mihi boni cupio, id in ceteris debeo satagere" (LO Praefatiuncula 1, *Amalarii opera* 2, p. 25). Cf. Augustine, *De civitate Dei* 14. 8; *De sermone Domini in monte* 2. 22. 74-76, ed. A. MUTZENBECHER (Turnhout, 1967: CCSL 35), pp. 171-175 (see for the manuscript transmission pp. XVII-XXVIII).

patristic authority is indicative of his conviction that everything he has to say is founded on these measures of orthodoxy.

The next sentences of the preface reveal his basic optimism, reminiscent of Gregorian thought, about the capacity of the mind helped by God to reach toward spiritual understanding. Clinging to the will as branches do to a stalk, Amalarius explains, the soul's appetite (*appetitus*), aided by reason or reasoning (*ratio*), naturally turns to its creator; for reason seeks to know the object of its desire.⁴⁸ Central to this quest is the "thing (*res*)" that God, the "author of all things (*auctor omnium rerum*)", and the Holy Spirit bestow on the soul, the catalyst – it seems, though Amalarius's definition of the term *res* is not entirely clear from the context – to discernment of the allegorical significance of thoughts based on bodily sense perception. To the virtuous soul, God gives "the thing that is subtlest and worthiest"; to the soul clouded by sin, as is Amalarius's, the gift is "grosser and more obvious", since "the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man unto profit" (I Cor 12, 7).⁴⁹ Amalarius indicates that this spiritual gift is directed to the "eyes (*oculi*)", implying an inner or spiritual power of sight. But both in this passage and elsewhere in the *Liber officialis*, the lack of precision to the references to the eye, eyes, and vision associated with his meditation suggests a quasi-elision of physical sight with mental gaze, perhaps again indicative of his conception of the perceptible and spiritual worlds as basically contiguous.⁵⁰

Building on a traditional analogy between ruminative meditation and digestion widely found in early medieval monastic literature, Amalarius goes on, in the *praefatiuncula*, to state that the churning of thoughts ingested in the "stomach of the mind (*venter mentis*)" produces a mental "belch (*ructus*)" that rises toward higher things.⁵¹ Because of his own sinfulness, the "grosser thing"

⁴⁸ *LO Praefat. 2, Amalarii opera 2*, p. 25. Amalarius's use of the term *ratio* here recalls Gregory's usage. See STRAW, *Gregory the Great*, pp. 42–43; compare (for Augustine and Boethius) G.-E. DEMERS, "Les Divers sens du mot '*ratio*' au moyen âge: Autour d'un texte de Maître Ferrier de Catalogne (1275)", *Etudes d'histoire littéraire et doctrinale du XIII^e siècle*, première série (Paris, 1932), pp. 105–139, at pp. 117–119.

⁴⁹ "*Qui claro lumine pollent et sanis oculis, his proponitur subtilissima res et dignissima; qui aliquo nevo peccatorum fuscantur, his grossior et manifestior a moderatore aequissimo Deo. Unde apostolus: 'Unicuique', inquit, 'datur manifestatio spiritus ad utilitatem'*" (*LO Praefatiuncula 3, Amalarii opera 2*, pp. 25–26).

⁵⁰ *LO Praefatiuncula 3, Amalarii opera 2*, p. 25. Cf. *LO 1. 40* and *3 Praefatiuncula, Amalarii opera 2*, pp. 190, 257. The difference from physical sight is made clearest in *LO 3. 25*, p. 341, where Amalarius describes what the church 'sees' in the eucharist. See below, at n. 65.

⁵¹ "*Stomachus est qui diversos cibos recipit, de quibus solet ructus fieri ad superiora; similiter quidam venter est mentis, qui recipit cogitationes. Si his defuerit res, non habent unde ructum faciant*" (*LO Praefatiuncula 3, Amalarii opera 2*, p. 26). Cf. *LO 1. 27, Amalarii opera 2*,

the Spirit bestows on Amalarius's mind allows only "exploration rather than exposition of the liturgical office (*potius ad indagandum quam exponendum, id est de officio*)", but even so, his work conforms to the divine will that all mortals devoutly employ their gifts in all humility to be worthy of eternal reward.⁵² The preface ends with the comment that while Amalarius's task is arduous, his aim is to know the *ratio* in the liturgy's "marrow (*in medulla*)" as it existed in the hearts of the rites' composers.⁵³ The spiritual meaning with which those authors infused their texts and Amalarius's interpretation of that meaning, however imperfect, depend on the same Spirit of God. Whether or not he completely succeeds in learning those writers' intentions, his teachings, too, may harmonize with sacred wisdom.⁵⁴

Other passages in the *Liber officialis* hint, with less clarity, at similar ideas about the mental activity behind its composition. One comment occurs near the beginning of the dedication to Louis the Pious. Amalarius recalls that his long struggle to understand the liturgy was like confinement in a dark dungeon, until the Holy Spirit granted him illumination, a shaft of brilliance cutting through the gloom, and he finally began to write.⁵⁵ The preface of the third or final edition incorporates, into comments on the eucharist and the mass, a statement from a letter by Augustine to Bishop Boniface on the signifying function of sacraments.⁵⁶ Florus, in keeping with the sharper separation he envisaged be

p. 146, quoting Gregory I; *Codex expositionis* II, c. 16. 6-7, *Amalarii opera* 1, p. 277, quoting *Apc* 10, 8-9.

⁵² Cf. Cassian, *Conlatio* 14. 5-6, ed. E. PICHÉRY, *Jean Cassien, Conférences*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1955-1959: SC 42, 54, 64), 2, pp. 186-187: each person should persevere in his profession, pursuing the gifts received from God.

⁵³ *LO Praefatiuncula* 4, *Amalarii opera* 2, p. 26.

⁵⁴ Note the confidence he expresses to Louis the Pious that, despite his sins and inability to be certain of the inner thoughts of the liturgy's composers, he can attain some measure of truthful insight, so long as the emperor confirms that the *LO* follows the way of charity: *LO Praefatio*, *Amalarii opera* 2, pp. 19-21.

⁵⁵ "*Praeterita proxima aestate videbatur mihi, quasi in crypta posito, fenestratim lucis scintillas radiare usque ad nostram parvitatem de re quam desiderabam. Longa esurie avidus, non frenum passus sum timoris alicuius magistri, sed, ilico mente gratias agens Deo, scripsi quod sensi*" (*LO Praefatio* 1-2, *Amalarii opera* 2, p. 19). The reference to "fear of any master" is hard to interpret. An indirect source may be Augustine, *De doctrina Christiana*, *Prooemium* 8, p. 5. The likely biblical source is Mt 23, 8-10; like the gospel passage, Amalarius implicitly draws a distinction between earthly pedagogy (whose masters he does not fear) and instruction directly from God or Christ. Cf. his *Codex expositionis* II, 16. 15, *Amalarii opera* 1, p. 279; Agobard, *Contra libros quatuor Amalarii* 19, ed. L. VAN ACKER, *Agobardus Lugdunensis, Opera omnia* (Turnhout, 1981: CCCM 52), p. 367. On Agobard's authorship of this work, ZECHIEL-ECKES, *Florus von Lyon*, pp. 47-50.

⁵⁶ "*Sacramenta debent habere similitudinem aliquam earum rerum quarum sacramenta*

tween the corporeal and the spiritual worlds (as will be discussed later), implies that the eucharist's sensible features of bread and wine do not signify the spiritual presence of body and blood. What the physical senses of the faithful perceive cannot assist the mind's awareness of the eucharist's hidden, immaterial power.⁵⁷ Amalarius, in line with the clearer continuum he seems to posit between the mundane and the spiritual, uses the passage from Augustine's letter to suggest that the external features of the mass elements and the mass ritual help the faithful recognize the sacrament's spiritual reality.⁵⁸

Unlike Augustine writing to Boniface, however, Amalarius places this discussion of the eucharist in a discourse that begins and ends with comments on the different forms of prayer. The entire section exemplifies his own progression from *lectio* to *meditatio*. The preface opens with scripture and two church fathers: a reference to the types of prayer mentioned in 1 Timothy 2. 1 and to discussions by Augustine and Ambrose.⁵⁹ The transition to *meditatio*, whereby Amalarius shifts from reliance on other authorities to his own, spiritually guided thought that grows out of their teachings, is announced in his oft-quoted declaration that, "in everything I write, I am supported by the judgment of the true, holy and pious fathers; meanwhile, I say what I perceive (*In omnibus quae scribo, suspendor verorum, sanctorumque, ac piorum patrum iudicio; interim dico quae sentio*)".⁶⁰ Directly thereafter come the observations concerning the eucharist that include Augustine's statement (though his name is not mentioned) and then a series of loosely associated ideas, with no clear patristic source, that reveal the independent movement of Amalarius's thinking

sunt" (*LO Prooem.* 7, *Amalarii opera* 2, p. 14; Augustine, *Epistola* 98. 9, ed. in: *PL* 33, col. 364).

⁵⁷ See *Flori epistola* 9, ed. E. DÜMLER, in: *Epistolae Karolini aevi (III)*, ed. E. DÜMLER et al. (Berlin, 1898-1899: *MGH EPP* 5), pp. 271-272; *Conc. Carisiac.*, ed. WERMINGHOFF, pp. 780-781, esp. p. 781 ll. 10-15. This emphasis on the spirituality (the utter non-physicality) yet truth of the eucharistic presence sets Florus's thought in line with that of Ratramnus of Corbie and Gottschalk of Orbais: C. CHAZELLE, *The Crucified God in the Carolingian Era: Theology and Art of Christ's Passion* (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 225-236. Florus and Ratramnus also supported Gottschalk in the predestination controversy, despite some differences in their doctrines: *ibid.*, pp. 178-181.

⁵⁸ *LO Prooem.* 6-7, *Amalarii opera* 2, p. 14. Cf. *LO* 2. 14. 8, p. 235 ("Omnia haec quae extrinsecus geruntur, signa sunt rerum intimarum"); *LO* 3. 1, *Amalarii opera* 2, pp. 257-260. That this recognition of spiritual truth depends on the mind or soul being cleansed of sin is implied in *LO* 3 *Praefatiuncula*, *Amalarii opera* 2, p. 257: "... prompti sumus animo ad suscipiendum Dei munus, si tamen ipse dignatur purgare et serenare oculum, in quo discamus de officio missae, quid rationis in se contineat diversitas illa quae ibi agitur ...".

⁵⁹ *LO Prooem.* 2-5, *Amalarii opera* 2, pp. 13-14.

⁶⁰ *LO Prooem.* 6, *Amalarii opera* 2, p. 14.

from one truth to the next, until it gradually circles back to the theme of prayer.⁶¹

For Amalarius, the presence of Christ's body and blood in the eucharist lend a unique dimension to its function as a set of signs: not only do the sacrament's visible features designate this immaterial reality, but the mass makes it truly available to the pious. His doctrine that the eucharist contains the body and blood represents the consensus in the Carolingian church,⁶² yet the immediacy of the inner experience of Christ that the bread and wine provide, according to Book 3 Chapter 25 of the *Liber officialis*, is notable.⁶³ The thoughts inspired by Amalarius's liturgical texts and his familiarity with the mass bring the passion and the crucified Christ into the forefront of his memory as a series of vivid, mental images. Within the bread and wine as in his mind, "the passion is on display".⁶⁴ In the present, in the mass, Christ ascends the cross, just as his body lives ("*est vivum*") in the sacrament and in Amalarius's thoughts.⁶⁵ The church

sees with its own eyes what is absent to mortals, sees what it ought to believe, even though it does not yet see this thing in truth. It believes [to be] present the sacrifice borne in the hands of angels before the lord's face, and it perceives that it must be eaten by human mouth; for it believes [the sacrifice] to be the lord's body and

⁶¹ See *LO Prooem.* 2-10, *Amalarii opera* 2, pp. 13-15. This pattern is replicated in other parts of the *LO*. Compare, e.g. *LO* 1. 1, *Amalarii opera* 2, pp. 26-36, which analyzes the Septuagesima. Amalarius moves from passages drawn from Jeremiah, Isaiah, Zacharias, and Jerome's commentary on Zacharias, with his own comments highlighting their moral significance, into meditation on the Septuagesima. The emphasis is on the need to abstain from earthly delights during Lent, the alienation from God caused by sin, the importance of penitence, and the role of baptism. The loosely associated sequence of thoughts brings him back to the meaning of the term 'Septuagesima', and (pp. 30-31) to additional passages from Eusebius and Augustine that become the basis of further reflection. Also worthy of note is Amalarius's striking analysis of the gospel lection in his *Codex expositionis* II. Here he speaks partly in the first person, as the soul that attains its beloved in divine contemplation thanks to the coming of the Holy Spirit (*Amalarii opera* 1, pp. 277-279); see FERRIBY, "Development of Liturgical Symbolism", pp. 194-199.

⁶² CHAZELLE, *The Crucified God in the Carolingian Era*, pp. 209-238, with references to the textual sources and earlier scholarship.

⁶³ *LO* 3. 25, *Amalarii opera*, pp. 340-343.

⁶⁴ "*In sacramento panis et vini, necnon etiam in memoria mea, passio Christi in promptu est*" (*LO* 3. 25. 1, *Amalarii opera* 2, p. 340).

⁶⁵ "*Sicut in superioribus Christi corpus est vivum in sacramento panis et vini, atque in memoria mea, ita in praesenti ascendit in crucem*" (*LO* 3. 25. 2, *Amalarii opera* 2, p. 340).

blood, and from this morsel the souls of consumers are filled with heavenly blessing.⁶⁶

Amalarius does not explicitly identify most aspects of the liturgy as signs, but it is evident he thought of them in an analogous manner, though not always with visual similitude playing a clear role.⁶⁷ The perceptible elements of the liturgy noted in his liturgical codices or seen and heard in its performance, he seems convinced, provoke thoughts which can then or later be present to the mind, allowing for meditation on their Christian meaning. What seems generally at issue, as in his analyses of the eucharist and the mass, is not memory in the sense of recalling something that remains fixed in the past, but a phenomenon by which ideas are brought back into consciousness (a frequently used phrase is *ad memoriam reducens*).⁶⁸ As he contemplates these thoughts derived from sense experience and their Christian significance, and turns with the aid of reason toward God, his mind links individual ideas together, sometimes with recalled biblical passages and patristic materials, building new thoughts up from this base. Some aspects of the exegesis formulated in this fashion are based on Amalarius's discernment of visible similarities between the liturgical elements and the meanings he assigns to them. More often his commentary implies that

⁶⁶ "*Mira et magna fides sanctae ecclesiae, quae suis oculis videt quod mortalibus deest, videt quid credere debeat, quamvis nondum videat quod in specie est; credit sacrificium praesens per angelorum manus deferri ante conspectum Domini, et sentit mandandum esse ab humano ore; credit namque corpus et sanguinem Domini esse, ac hoc morsu caelesti benedictione repleti animas summentium*" (LO 3. 25. 6, *Amalarii opera* 2, pp. 341-342). This vividness recalls the eucharist doctrine of Paschasius Radbertus. Since none of Amalarius's extant writings deals with the issues raised in the Carolingian eucharist controversy (likely a development of c. 850 more than the 830s), it is impossible to decide what position he would have defended there. All Carolingian theologians agreed that the bread and wine of the mass contained Christ's true body and blood; they differed on the relationship between those sacred entities and the body and blood of the incarnation, an issue Amalarius does not discuss. Still, his language is reminiscent of the quasi-physicality Radbertus attributes to the eucharistic body and blood. Note e.g. the miraculous visions the latter associates with the sacrament (*De corpore et sanguine Domini cum appendice epistola ad Fredugardum* 14, ed. B. PAULUS (Turnhout, 1969: CCCM 16), pp. 85-92).

⁶⁷ Cf. LO 1. 29. 4, *Amalarii opera* 2, p. 153; LO 3. 1, *Amalarii opera* 2, pp. 257-260.

⁶⁸ E.g. LO 1. 1. 10, *Amalarii opera* 2, p. 29; LO 1. 12. 33, *Amalarii opera* 2, pp. 78-79; LO 1. 13. 6, *Amalarii opera* 2, pp. 92-93; LO 1. 31. 8, *Amalarii opera* 2, pp. 160-161; LO 1. 38. 2, *Amalarii opera* 2, p. 181; LO 3. 5. 1, *Amalarii opera* 2, p. 271; LO 3. 28. 8, *Amalarii opera* 2, p. 355; LO 3. 30. 1, *Amalarii opera* 2, p. 359. See JACOBSON, "*Ad memoriam reducens*", pp. 275-276. The sense of 'making present' in Amalarius's thought is close to the notion of listening to an author speak through the words of his text and bringing these voices and written words into the mind, which Carruthers has so well described: *Book of Memory*, pp. 169-170. Cf. LO 1. 14. 6-7, *Amalarii opera* 2, pp. 100-101: when Amalarius adores the cross, Christ's suffering is "inscribed on [his] heart" ("*passus Christus pro me proscriptus est in corde meo*").

the resemblances are verbal or textual. The names of objects and gestures, or numbers associated with them, are associated with similar words and numbers found in other liturgical, scriptural, and patristic contexts, or with different words possessing similar meanings. Yet whether verbal or visual similarities and parallels are mentioned, the progression from bodily sense perception – of words or the liturgy's visible elements – to thoughts of spiritual things is conceived as essentially seamless. Thought and prayer flow gradually but effortlessly out of the encounter with the liturgy and its written records.

The allegorical significance Amalarius discovers in the liturgy is impressively wide-ranging. Especially noticeable, however, is the emphasis on tropological interpretation. In part, the frequent references to the moral significance of liturgical elements can be read in a straightforward manner, as reminders of the many ways, for him, the liturgy recalls the sinful mortal's distance from heaven and the value of its rituals for cleansing the soul of its sins. But in addition, I suggest as a hypothesis, Amalarius conceived of his meditation in the *Liber officialis*, moving through the different parts of the liturgy, as a penitential process or journey that could help him cleanse his soul – and that of the reader – of the sinfulness clouding its gaze mentioned in the *praefatiuncula* of Book 1.⁶⁹ Although he never states that he understood the treatise in this way, it offers a motive for the unusual choice of where in the liturgical calendar he starts his exegesis, the order in which some liturgical observances are discussed, and the attention paid, especially in Book 1, to themes of penance, sin, and moral virtue, and to the gift of the Spirit.

The liturgical commentaries by Isidore of Seville and Rabanus Maurus, who borrows from Isidore, open with discussions of *ecclesia*; the first calendrical observance to which they devote individual chapters, after dealing with other topics, is Christmas.⁷⁰ The *Liber officialis*, however, begins in Chapter 1 with the Septuagesima, the period before Lent, the season that most forcefully urges the faithful to contrition of sins.⁷¹ The next fourteen chapters (2-15), out of a total of forty-one in Book 1, continue through the pre-Lenten and Lenten seasons, with six chapters (10-15: about fifty pages in Hanssens' edition, almost one third of Book 1) devoted to Lent's conclusion in Holy Week.⁷² Five of the

⁶⁹ *LO Praefatiuncula* 3, *Amalarii opera* 2, pp. 25-26.

⁷⁰ Isidore, *De ecclesiasticis officiis* 1. 1, 1. 26 (25), pp. 4, 29-30; Rabanus, *De institutione clericorum* 1. 1, 2. 31, pp. 291, 377-379. Walafrid, *Libellus de exordiis et incrementis* 1, ed. KRAUSE, p. 475 discusses the origins of temples and altars. Unlike Isidore and Rabanus, he does not present separate chapters on the Temporale.

⁷¹ *LO* 1. 1, *Amalarii opera* 2, pp. 26-36. The chapter divisions are Amalarius's: cf. HANSENS, *Amalarii opera* 1, pp. 135-136.

⁷² *LO* 1. 2-15, *Amalarii opera* 2, pp. 36-108.

next eight chapters on Easter (16-34) discuss the state of the catechumen and the rites of baptism and confirmation, when new Christians are first washed of sin and receive the Spirit.⁷³ The next six chapters (35-40) mainly concern Pentecost, the feast celebrating the Spirit's descent to the apostles.⁷⁴ The final chapter in the book (41) breaks with the calendrical order to discuss the Mass of the Innocents of 28 December. Amalarius asserts that he appended this chapter to Book 1 because he forgot to include it in Book 3, but this seems unlikely to be the only explanation, since as he also mentions, the chapter is a reminder that the Spirit of Pentecost makes mortals innocent.⁷⁵ The first book thus fittingly closes with a final tribute to the purgation achieved by means of the long weeks from the Septuagesima to Pentecost, and perhaps metaphorically, a tribute to the cleansing of Amalarius's and his readers' souls through their meditation on those ceremonies. Possibly there is a penitential significance, as well, to the number of chapters in Book 1: forty chapters, the number of days in Lent, plus the forty-first chapter (40+1) on the feast commemorating the Spirit's bestowal of renewed innocence.

Viewed in this light, it seems appropriate that only after this lengthy process of penitential meditation, which has taken his thoughts from contrition to the gift of the Holy Spirit, does Amalarius turn, in Book 2, to the exegesis of *ecclesia*: the grades, vestments, personnel, and material fittings of the church that the Spirit established at Pentecost.⁷⁶ From there he logically (it seems to me) moves in Book 3 to the mass, the sacrament reserved to the faithful who have received the Spirit in baptism and been restored to divine grace through

⁷³ LO 1. 16-34, *Amalarii opera* 2, pp. 108-170; see LO 1. 24-29, *Amalarii opera* 2, pp. 128-156.

⁷⁴ LO 1. 35-40, *Amalarii opera* 2, pp. 170-192.

⁷⁵ "In qua posteriore parte iuxta ordinem status officiorum debui interponere de missa Innocentum, sed, quia oblitus sum tunc illud introducere, nunc estimo me invenisse congruum locum, ut post Spiritum Sanctum, qui innocentes facit, varietatem missae Innocentum introducerem; ac ideo hic habeat locum de missa Innocentum" (LO 1. 41. 1, *Amalarii opera* 2, pp. 192-193). The theory that this arrangement was on some level planned and the feast of the Innocents not simply forgotten, contrary to Amalarius's assertion, supports the hypothesis that he was responsible for the *Retractatio prima* of the LO: HANSSSENS, *Amalarii opera* 1, pp. 162-169. One argument against Amalarius's authorship, Jones notes, is that Hanssens' *Retractatio prima* manuscripts do not correct the 'error' by shifting the feast to its calendrical location (JONES, *A Lost Work*, pp. 22-23). But if Amalarius selected the location in the *Liber officialis* to stress the innocence that followed Pentecost, it made sense for him to retain this in the *Retractatio*. On the other hand, another author might have made the change because he was unaware of Amalarius's original intent.

⁷⁶ LO 2, *Amalarii opera* 2, pp. 195-254.

repentance.⁷⁷ At the end of Book 3, after, in a sense, having ascended from the depths of penitence to full membership in the church and reception of the eucharistic body and blood, he turns to the liturgical observances that commemorate the incarnation, beginning with the feast of John the Baptist and continuing to Epiphany.⁷⁸ The second edition completed by 831 added the fourth book, written, perhaps, once Amalarius felt that his ongoing work of meditation had raised his understanding to a higher level than he had achieved with the first edition. Here he comments on the divine office and offers new ideas on the meaning of some of the liturgical elements already discussed in previous chapters.⁷⁹

If this interpretation of Amalarius's intentions in his treatise is correct, it encourages us to give further thought to his dedication of the first edition to Louis the Pious in the early 820's. As mentioned earlier, we do not know whether Amalarius lost the see of Trier under Charlemagne or Louis, that is before or after his trip to Constantinople in 813-814. In either instance, though, one purpose of the treatise was quite possibly to win Louis' forgiveness of the sin that had provoked this downfall. The glowing language in which the dedication hails Louis confirms Amalarius's devotion to the emperor; his reference to imprisonment may recall not only his long wait for the Spirit to inspire his exegesis, but his exile from imperial favour.⁸⁰ But it is possible Amalarius also meant the *Liber officialis* to offer Louis a model to follow in his own inner work of penance and meditation, by showing the mirror of that work in the liturgy. It is interesting that the dedication praises Louis for his pious humility and notes this to be a virtue in him emulated by others who want to proceed, "from the lowest and most corrupt things to the highest and everlasting things".⁸¹ Even before he reads the *Liber officialis*, in other words, the emperor exemplifies the faithful striving to turn from sin to salvation required of all

⁷⁷ LO 3 *Praefatiuncula*-37, *Amalarii opera* 2, pp. 257-372.

⁷⁸ LO 3. 38-43, *Amalarii opera* 2, pp. 373-381. This brings the temporal cycle back to the starting point in LO 1 of the Septuagesima. Book 3 concludes with chapters on the mass of the dead and the series of appended letters.

⁷⁹ See LO 4 *Praefatiuncula*, *Amalarii opera* 2, p. 403. On the date of the second edition, HANSSSENS, *Amalarii opera* 1, p. 68; see pp. 155-156 on its contents.

⁸⁰ LO, *Praefatio* 2, *Amalarii opera* 2, p. 19; JONES, *A Lost Work*, pp. 168-171, citing HANSSSENS, *Amalarii opera* 1, p. 67 and O.G. OEXLE, "Die Karolinger und die Stadt des heiligen Arnulfs", *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 1 (1967), pp. 250-364, at pp. 333-334.

⁸¹ "Venit in mentem inter omnes spirituales mentes in hoc saeculo degentes vestram potissimum pollere, cui inest caritas sine livore, sapientia sine praeiudicio scientiae quae inflat, humilitas cum pietate quae nulli rectitudini resistit, quae vos cotidie exaltat ante Dominum et eos qui vestigia vestra intuentur, sequendo ab infimis et caducis ad sublimia et sempiterna erigit" (LO *Praefatio* 3, *Amalarii opera* 2, pp. 19-20).

mortals. If these speculations have merit, moreover, we may wonder whether a connection exists between the treatise's penitential character and the events of the early 820s that made penance such an important court issue. Conceivably, Amalarius was influenced not only by his own state of mind, but also by the atmosphere at the court in the few years leading up to the penitence performed by Louis and his bishops, during the synod of Attigny in 822, for the punishment carried out on Bernard and his associates in the revolt of 817.⁸²

The Reaction From Lyons

Florus and Agobard's opposition to Amalarius was influenced by the political situation in Lyons after the rebellion of 833 against Louis, but their arguments also reveal a more dualist cosmology than that of their adversary.⁸³ A broad characteristic of their thought, as indicated by both their tracts on the liturgy and some of their writings on other doctrinal matters, is a belief in the restricted possibility, for a living mortal, of contact with the spiritual. Although the entire cosmos is part of God's creation, the Bible, conciliar decrees, and patristic literature set firm boundaries dividing the heavenly sphere from that of ordinary human action. The spiritual does not descend as easily into the mundane as it does for Amalarius; rather, the emphasis is on the eternal in God, its separation from the temporal realm of variance and change, and the limited number of things on earth that can therefore assist the Christian to turn, in thought and prayer, toward divinity.⁸⁴

⁸² *Concilium Attiniacense*, 822, c. 1, ed. WERMINGHOFF, *Concilia aevi Karolini*, 2, pp. 468-472, esp. p. 471; E. BOSHOF, "Einheitsidee und Teilungsprinzip in der Regierungszeit Ludwigs des Frommen", in: *Charlemagne's Heir: New Perspectives on the Reign of Louis the Pious (814-840)*, ed. P. GODMAN and R. COLLINS (Oxford, 1990), pp. 161-189, at pp. 181-182; L. HALPHEN, *Charlemagne and the Carolingian Empire*, tr. G. DE NIE (Amsterdam, 1977), pp. 169-174.

⁸³ For Florus against Amalarius, *Concilium Carisiacense*, 838. mense Septembri, ed. WERMINGHOFF, *Concilia aevi Karolini*, 2; *Epistola Flori*, *Amalarii epistola* 13, ed. DÜMLER in: *Epistolae Karolini aevi* (III), pp. 267-273; *Invectio canonica Martini papae* (probably by Florus), ed. in: *Amalarii opera* 1, pp. 367-387; *Liber de diuina psalmodia*, ed. in: *PL* 104, cols. 325-330; J.-M. HANSSENS, "Un document anti-amalarien", *Ephemerides liturgicae* 41 (1927), pp. 237-244. On the quarrel and the problems with the MGH CONC edition, see ZECHIEL-ECKES, *Florus von Lyon*, pp. 27-61. Zechiel-Eckes is preparing a new edition of Florus's polemical writings. For Agobard, see his *De antiphonario*, ed. VAN ACKER, pp. 335-351; ID., *Contra libros*, ed. VAN ACKER, pp. 353-367.

⁸⁴ This is the general picture that emerges from the writings of Florus and Agobard noted above (previous note). Of their other theological tracts, those I have consulted which reveal a similar perspective include Florus (Pseudo-Remigius), *De tribus epistolis liber*, ed. in: *PL* 121,

These lines of thought underlie the assertions of both Agobard and Florus that only some liturgical practices in their own day are divinely sanctioned. The rituals of Christian churches are part spiritual, part mundane. Exactly how they make this distinction in practical terms is ambiguous, yet it is evident that, for them, the liturgy's mundane elements include the many features they believe to represent variations among churches and alterations over time that lack God's blessing, details that therefore do not harmonize with divine unity and immutability.⁸⁵ The liturgy puts the Christian in touch with the holy, but numerous customs have been added on top of its sacred core and do not belong to the fixed domain of spiritual truth established in the Bible and the teachings of the church. In these liturgical practices, God's Spirit is not present. Diversity is acceptable in the liturgy, it seems, only because, consisting of attributes that belong solely to this world, it cannot interfere with the invisible metaphysical unity of the Church as the body of Christ.⁸⁶ A letter by Florus against Amalarius draws on Augustine to explain this distinction between the liturgy's sanctioned and unsanctioned parts: only universal observances authorized in scripture or based on ecclesiastical tradition are venerable, he notes, whereas variable local practices have "no signification".⁸⁷ As Agobard states, the diverse liturgical texts composed by men not "driven by the Spirit of God" do not possess mystical meaning.⁸⁸ One proof of this lack of divine ordination, the attacks made by both theologians suggest, is simply the absence of biblical and patristic support for a detail's allegorical interpretation. By its very existence, a scriptural or patristic source for allegorical exegesis demonstrates the subject is

cols. 985-1068; *id.* (Pseudo-Remigius), *Libellus de tendenda immobiliter scripturae veritate*, ed. in: *PL* 121, cols. 1083-1134; Agobard, *De picturis et imaginibus*, ed. VAN ACKER, pp. 149-181; *id.*, *De quorundam inlusione signorum*, ed. VAN ACKER, pp. 235-243. Although the teachings of each scholar have distinctive nuances, the characteristics I note suggest, with both theologians, a dualist reading of Augustinian doctrine similar to that of Theodulf of Orléans and Gottschalk of Orbais. See CHAZELLE, *The Crucified God in the Carolingian Era*, pp. 39-52, 122-123, 165-181.

⁸⁵ I realize this explanation is circular. To say that a spiritual element of the liturgy has God's blessing does not explain why God chooses to sanction some aspects but not others. But I find it impossible to get a more precise idea of the reasoning of Florus or Agobard beyond the limits both place on access to the spiritual.

⁸⁶ This is implied by *Epistola Flori* 6, ed. DÜMMER, p. 270, ll. 18-22; see c. 7, p. 271, ll. 5-9.

⁸⁷ *Epistola Flori* 6, ed. DÜMMER, p. 270.

⁸⁸ See Agobard, *Contra libros* 9, ed. VAN ACKER, pp. 360-362. Agobard comments in *De antiphonario* on the need to follow the apostles' example in seeking formulae for prayer from God and the Holy Spirit: *De antiphonario* 1-2, ed. VAN ACKER, pp. 337-338.

blessed by God and therefore has spiritual significance. Again, the Bible and ecclesiastical tradition decisively determine the limits of the catholic faith.

The emphatic separation between the earthly and spiritual realms evident in the writings of Florus and Agobard also elucidates their reluctance to admit a role to the physical senses in the acquisition of spiritual insight from the liturgy, except in terms of seeing or hearing the liturgy's divinely sanctioned texts. The smooth progression that Amalarius posits, from bodily sense experience of any element of the liturgy, to inner thoughts, to meditative awareness of sacred truth, seems absent from their way of thinking. Instead, the point of departure for awareness of the sacred in the liturgy (for instance, awareness of the eucharistic presence of Christ's body and blood) is implied to be itself spiritual, dependent on the soul's reception of God's Spirit and on its purely inner contemplation apart from the corporeal senses. The *expositio missae* that Florus composed in the mid-830s, during his quarrel with Amalarius, reflects this outlook.⁸⁹ Little interest is shown in allegorical interpretation of the liturgy's perceptible components. Most of the treatise consists of excerpts from scriptural and patristic sources demonstrating, Florus implies, that the prayers and few actions of the mass discussed are divinely ordained, and clarifying how they invoke the spiritual presence of Christ, the angels, and the saints.

The evidence that Amalarius had abandoned the Bible and ecclesiastical tradition by deviating from these doctrines seemed unquestionable to his opponents. In their opinion, he misinterpreted the Bible and liturgical writings to support his exegesis; included unsanctioned texts in his antiphonary;⁹⁰ and espoused erroneous theological and sacramental teachings. Florus attacked Amalarius with particular vehemence for declaring that the division of the bread of the mass into three parts allegorically refers to the triform or tripartite nature of Christ's body. For Florus, this doctrine amounted to both eucharistic and christological heresy and underscored the distance separating Amalarius from divine unity.⁹¹

⁸⁹ Florus, *Opusculum de expositione missae*, ed. in: *PL* 119, cols. 15-72. Also see his comments on the eucharist, noted above (n. 57).

⁹⁰ Agobard, *De antiphonario*, ed. VAN ACKER, pp. 337-351; ID., *Contra libros* 2, 9, ed. VAN ACKER, pp. 355-357, 360-361.

⁹¹ *LO* 3. 35, *Amalarii opera* 2, pp. 367-368; see *Epistola Flori* 4, 7-9, ed. DÜMMLER, pp. 269-272; *Conc. Carisiac.*, ed. WERMINGHOFF, pp. 770-775, 779-781; and possibly quoting Amalarius's lost *Embolis meorum opusculorum*, *Invectio canonica* 31-48, *Amalarii opera* 1, pp. 374-378. Amalarius's doctrine and the reaction to them are discussed in JONES, *A Lost Work*, esp. pp. 153-156, with references to earlier scholarship. Hanssens argued that the *Embolis* was used in preparing the *Invectio canonica*: *Amalarii opera* 1, pp. 117-118, though this cannot be proven.

What also made him dangerous, his opponents thought, was his perseverance in error despite supposedly recognizing that many of his ideas lacked scriptural and ecclesiastical foundation. The evidence that his departures from scripture and catholic tradition were at least sometimes deliberate lay in his distinction – so they believed – between the Bible and church fathers on the one hand and, on the other, ideas discovered in his mind and through the Spirit. For Amalarius, as we have seen, these sources of truth coincided: what he taught, guided as he was by the Holy Spirit, necessarily conformed to scripture and the fathers, even when he could not actually identify precedents for his ideas. But for Florus and Agobard, Amalarius's references to ideas found within himself, ones that seemed to them utterly lacking in scriptural or patristic basis, showed that the spirit in him could only be wicked; for the Holy Spirit would never separate someone from heaven and orthodoxy.⁹² Some of their accusations refer to this misleading spirit as Amalarius's own prideful mind or soul. The report of the synod of Quierzy (838) describes him as "vainly inflated by the sense of his own flesh, not following the Spirit of God but his own spirit".⁹³ According to Agobard, those who follow their spirits as Amalarius does, abandoning the fathers and the church's sacred canons, are false prophets whose inner vision is empty.⁹⁴ But some of these and other passages elide Amalarius's "spirit" with warnings of demonic influence. His doctrines and the compositions in his antiphonary leave audiences open to evil spiritual forces; Agobard contrasts the wickedness of Amalarius's songs to David's singing which drove the spirit from Saul.⁹⁵ More directly, Amalarius is identified as himself the victim of demonic possession. A few of Florus's accusations convey a certain apocalyptic

⁹² E.g. see *Conc. Carisiac.*, ed. WERMINGHOFF, pp. 770, ll. 22-24; 772, ll. 42-43; 779-780; *Flori epistola* 6, ed. DÜMMLER, p. 270, ll. 2-4. Florus claims that Amalarius applied to himself II Pt 1, 21 ("Non enim voluntate humana allata est aliquando prophetia, sed Spiritu sancto inspirati locuti sunt sancti Dei homines"): *Conc. Carisiac.*, ed. WERMINGHOFF, p. 779, ll. 24-27. This aspect of the controversy is indicative of the problem spiritually guided insight generally presented for early medieval churchmen. Malign spirits do not always reveal themselves in an obvious fashion, for instance by provoking mentally deranged behaviour or clearly 'magical' practices. See Gregory, *Dialogues* 4. 50. 6, ed. and tr. A. DE VOGÜÉ, *Grégoire le Grand, Dialogues*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1978-1980: sc 251, 260, 265), 3, pp. 174-177; R. KIECKHEFER, "The specific rationality of medieval magic", *American Historical Review* 99 (1994), pp. 813-836, esp. pp. 828-830.

⁹³ "Audiat ergo hoc etiam iste, qui ambulans, frustra inflatus sensu carnis suae et non spiritum Dei sequens, sed spiritum suum ..." (*Conc. Carisiac.*, ed. WERMINGHOFF, p. 772, ll. 42-43; on the need to test a spirit to determine its source, ll. 38-42 (quoting I Io 4, 1-3)).

⁹⁴ Agobard, *De antiphonario* 9, ed. VAN ACKER, p. 343. Cf. *Conc. Carisiac.*, ed. WERMINGHOFF, p. 780 ll. 7-9 (quoting Ez 22, 28).

⁹⁵ Agobard, *De antiphonario* 12, ed. VAN ACKER, p. 345.

anxiety: Amalarius is allied with Satan; he is the Antichrist or a follower of Antichrist, because his spirit sends Jesus away.⁹⁶ For Florus, it appears from these charges, one of the critical risks presented by Amalarius was that exegesis of the liturgy, and therefore the liturgy itself, a preeminent tool of the church for wresting mortals from Satan's power,⁹⁷ would become instruments of the devil.

The divergent lines of thought espoused by Amalarius and his two opponents echo tensions among earlier Carolingian scholars traceable back as far as the court of Charlemagne. Some of Amalarius's ideas show analogies to the teachings of Alcuin, Charlemagne's chief Anglo-Saxon advisor († 804). Alcuin's notion of classical learning as a tool for progressing toward spiritual wisdom, recently analyzed by Mary Alberi, suggests a Gregorian doctrine similar to Amalarius's of the spiritual and material realms as basically contiguous.⁹⁸ The underlying concept in the *Liber officialis* of an ascent from sensory experience to meditation on spiritual things, and the employment of the term *ratio* and related words in this context, have affinities with Gregorian theology, but also with Alcuin's idea of the monastic "true philosophy" and his own usage of the vocabulary of *ratio*, for instance in his treatise, *On the reason of the soul* (*De ratione animae*).⁹⁹ The same and other aspects of Amalarius's teachings are suggestive of ideas and vocabulary in tracts by students of Alcuin,

⁹⁶ See *Invectio canonica*, *Amalarii opera* 1, pp. 368-372, 374; *Conc. Carisiac.*, ed. WERMINGHOFF, p. 780, ll. 5-7 (quoting Ez 13, 3), ll. 38-41; *Flori epistola* 10, ed. DÜMMER, pp. 272, l. 43-273, l. 2.

⁹⁷ Compare K. JOLLY, "Medieval magic: Definitions, beliefs, practices", in: K. JOLLY, C. RAUDVERE and E. PETERS, *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe: The Middle Ages*, ed. B. ANKARLOO and S. CLARK (Philadelphia, 2002), pp. 1-71, at p. 19.

⁹⁸ M. ALBERI, "The 'Mystery of the Incarnation' and Wisdom's house (Prov. 9:1) in Alcuin's *Disputatio de vera philosophia*", *The Journal of Theological Studies*, n.s. 48 (1997), pp. 505-516; EAD., "The better paths of wisdom", pp. 896-910. Also see L. NEES, *A Tainted Mantle: Hercules and the Classical Tradition at the Carolingian Court* (Philadelphia, 1991), esp. pp. 112-131. Alcuin and his scholarship are now the subjects of a magisterial study by D.A. BULLOUGH, *Alcuin: Achievement and Reputation* (Leiden, 2004).

⁹⁹ Alcuin, *De anima ratione liber ad Eulaliam virginem*, ed. in: *PL* 101, cols. 639-647; cf. Alcuin, *Disputatio de vera philosophia*, ed. in: *PL* 101, cols. 851-853. See ALBERI, "Mystery of the Incarnation" and "The better paths of wisdom". Concerning Gregory's influence on Alcuin, see BULLOUGH, *Alcuin: Achievement and Reputation*, pp. 192, 266-267; NEES, *A Tainted Mantle*, pp. 115-117.

as well: Rabanus Maurus, as already remarked;¹⁰⁰ Candidus Wizo, who may have been the bishop of Trier from 804 to 809, directly before Amalarius held the position;¹⁰¹ and Fridugisus, Alcuin's successor as abbot of Tours and author of *De substantia nihili et tenebrarum*.¹⁰² These connections support, though do not prove, the hypothesis that Amalarius was himself one of Alcuin's pupils.¹⁰³

As for Florus and Agobard, antecedents for certain of their teachings are found in writings by Theodulf of Orléans († 821), Alcuin's Visigothic contemporary and intellectual rival at Charlemagne's court. The most important of these works is the treatise on the role of artistic images known as the *Opus Caroli regis contra synodum* or *Libri Carolini*, of which Theodulf was the principal author.¹⁰⁴ Although it has been recently argued that the doctrine of images in the *Opus Caroli regis* elucidates Amalarius's approach to the liturgy,¹⁰⁵ in fact the theology of the treatise written for Charlemagne has much clearer ties to that of Amalarius's adversaries. Like Agobard and Florus, Theodulf insisted that the Bible and ecclesiastical tradition distinguish the sacred from an arena of purely human, temporal action, to which he attributed the production and seeing of artistic images. Material things and physical sense experience cannot mediate spiritual insight. The Christian must turn away from ordinary mundane phenomena in order to gain knowledge of heaven, an endeavour identified in the *Opus Caroli regis* with the study of scripture as the supreme repository of divine wisdom.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁰ His *In honorem sanctae crucis*, discussed above, at n. 35.

¹⁰¹ JONES, *A Lost Work*, p. 82; see *ibid.*, pp. 103-105, 149-151, discussing the likely influence on Amalarius of Candidus Wizo, *Opusculum de passione Domini*, ed. in: *PL* 106, cols. 57-104. I mistakenly assigned this treatise to Candidus of Fulda in *The Crucified God in the Carolingian Era*, pp. 160-164. Amalarius's terminology of reason in *LO* 1, *Praefat.*, *Amalarii opera* 2, pp. 25-26 is reminiscent of the discussion of *ratio* in one of the Munich Passages, possibly by Candidus: J. MARENBO, *From the Circle of Alcuin to the School of Auxerre* (Cambridge, 1981), pp. 31-55, 151-166, esp. pp. 154-157.

¹⁰² Fridugisus, *De substantia nihili et tenebrarum*, ed. C. GENNARO, *Fridugiso di Tours e il "De substantia nihili et tenebrarum": Edizione critica e studio introduttivo* (Padova, 1963), see pp. 134-135 on *tenebrae*, a passage reminiscent of Amalarius's references to the *res* in the human mind and its relation to God the *auctor omnium rerum* (*LO* 1 *Praefatiuncula*, *Amalarii opera* 2, pp. 25-26). Cf. M.L. COLISH, "Carolingian debates over *Nihil* and *Tenebrae*: A study in theological method", *Speculum* 59 (1984), pp. 757-795, overlooking, I think, the importance for deciphering Fridugisus's argument of his desire to reconcile *tenebrae* with the literal truth of God's status as the *conditor rerum*.

¹⁰³ JONES, *A Lost Work*, esp. pp. 52-54.

¹⁰⁴ Above, n. 28.

¹⁰⁵ MESSNER, "Zur Hermeneutik allegorischer Liturgieerklärung", pp. 425-426; JONES, *A Lost Work*, pp. 144-145.

¹⁰⁶ CHAZELLE, *The Crucified God in the Carolingian Era*, pp. 39-52. Agobard's doctrine of

Although Amalarius's whereabouts and activities after the synod of Quierzy in 838 are obscure,¹⁰⁷ his scholarship continued to earn respect, the most important evidence being the sheer popularity of the *Liber officialis*. The first two editions circulated widely; mixed and abbreviated versions of the treatise were produced; and excerpts were interpolated into ninth-century *ordines*.¹⁰⁸ Few copies of the third edition survive, yet it is uncertain whether this indicates a decline in the work's appeal after the decision at Quierzy, as some historians have suggested. Since no significant new exegetical material was added to the third edition, a simpler explanation is that interest in the commentary had already been largely met by the diffusion of the earlier editions, which were subsequently copied and recopied. The completion of an abbreviated version (the *Retractatio prima*), possibly produced by Amalarius, possibly not long after 838, may have further eaten into the demand for copies of the third edition.¹⁰⁹

It is not surprising that Amalarius's approach to the liturgy was appreciated by other Carolingian monks and clergy, even after the condemnation at Quierzy. The ninth-century Carolingian writings that discuss the veneration of the cross, images, and relics of the saints, and those dealing with certain other topics such as the nature of the eucharist and the *visio Dei*, demonstrate the general growth of interest, during the ninth century, in the relation between the physical senses and the Christian search to access the sacred.¹¹⁰ Like the writings of Florus, Agobard, and Amalarius on the liturgy, these works indicate varied opinions about the nature of this relationship;¹¹¹ but considerable support

artistic images has some similarities to Theodulf's, without being identical: Agobard, *De picturis et imaginibus*, ed. VAN ACKER, pp. 149-181. See my article, "Memory, instruction, worship: 'Gregory's' influence on early medieval doctrines of the artistic image", in: *Gregory the Great*, ed. J.C. CAVADINI (Notre Dame, 1996), pp. 181-215, esp. pp. 197-198.

¹⁰⁷ STECK, *Der liturgiker Amalarius*, pp. 9-11.

¹⁰⁸ HANSSENS, *Amalarii opera*, 1, pp. 120-200; JONES, *A Lost Work*, pp. 8-9, 19-23; R.E. REYNOLDS, "Image and text: A Carolingian illustration of modifications in the early Roman eucharistic *Ordines*", *Viator* 14 (1983), pp. 59-75, at p. 64. Florus remarks that Amalarius's works are "surely dispersed almost everywhere [and] known to almost all men" ("*Certe libri ipsi fere ubique dispersi, fere omnibus noti sunt*": *Flori epistola* 3, ed. DÜMMLER, p. 268, ll. 30-31). Amalarius's continued good standing with some contemporaries, near the end of his life, is also evident from Hincmar's apparent request to him, c. 850, for help against the predestination doctrine of Gottschalk of Orbais. Amalarius's reply is lost: HANSSENS, *Amalarii opera* 1, pp. 81-82; CABANISS, *Amalarius of Metz*, pp. 92-93, 114.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. HANSSENS, *Amalarii opera* 1, pp. 120-121, 162-169. See above, n. 75.

¹¹⁰ CHAZELLE, *The Crucified God in the Carolingian Era*, pp. 119-128, 191-192, 207-208, 209-238.

¹¹¹ See D. APPLEBY, "Instruction and inspiration through images in the Carolingian period", in: *Word, Image, Number: Communication in the Middle Ages*, ed. J. CONTRENI (Florence,

can be discerned for the concept, which Amalarius shared, that under certain circumstances things perceived with the corporeal senses – such as works of art, crosses and crucifixes, holy shrines, or the bread and wine of the eucharist – inspire inner thoughts that support prayer and lead toward spiritual understanding. External sense experience is conducive to Christian meditation and devotion. The theological foundation of this outlook is rarely clarified; the *Liber officialis* is unusual for its close analysis of how the mind rises from the sensible arena of the liturgy to the inner contemplation of sacred truths. Nevertheless, it is evident that ideas paralleling Amalarius's conception of the role of sense experience, and diverging with the more restrictive theology of the *Opus Caroli regis* and Florus and Agobard, held some sway in ninth-century Carolingian intellectual circles.

In general, moreover, Amalarius's attitudes likely corresponded better to the actual devotional experiences of the majority of monks, clergy, and laity than did those of Florus and Agobard. In Carolingian monasteries, cathedrals, and parish churches, the experience most Christians had of the liturgy was probably not that conceived by Florus and Agobard of human elements interspersed with divine, but rather of an unbounded presence of the invisible Holy Spirit. Similarly, the meditative prayer of those participating in the liturgy or recalling its ceremonial most likely seemed to move smoothly from one aspect to the next. The works of art decorating churches, and their inscriptions, reminded viewers that God is always there. As clergy instructed the laity through sermons, the Spirit of God, though imperceptible to the bodily senses, perpetually attends the soul cleansed through contrition, penance, participation in the liturgy, and reception of the sacraments.¹¹² Probably no detail of the liturgy seemed devoid of that spiritual presence, for most Christians, no matter how much the individual practices of one church differed from those of another. The continuities in liturgical practice within any single church or monastery, the buildings that for many set the boundaries of their lifetime engagement with the rituals of their faith – the repetition of ceremonies from day to day and year to year – likely had greater impact on most of them than any notice of diversity or change.¹¹³

2002), pp. 85-111; H.L. KESSLER, “‘Facies bibliothecae revelatae’: Carolingian art as spiritual seeing”, in: *Testo e immagine nell'Alto Medioevo*, 2 vols. (Spoleto, 1994: *Atti delle Settimane di Studio del Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo* 41), 2, pp. 533-594 and Plates, reprinted in ID., *Spiritual Seeing*, pp. 149-189.

¹¹² See CHAZELLE, *The Crucified God in the Carolingian Era*, pp. 37, 153-154.

¹¹³ In general on the devotional life of the Carolingian laity, see J.M.H. SMITH, “Religion and lay society”, in: *NCMH* 2, pp. 654-678.

Amalarius's great achievement in the *Liber officialis* was to probe the consequences of this perspective on the liturgy more deeply than had any earlier Latin author, in a written account of the full range of mystical exegesis to which the Holy Spirit led him as he pondered liturgical texts and the scripture and patristic literature that elucidated their meaning. Yet it is important to recognize that the distinctions Florus and Agobard made between the human and spiritual elements of ecclesiastical ritual, which seem ultimately rather abstract and hard to connect with the liturgy's contemporary experience, their attacks on Amalarius's perceived deviations from scripture and ecclesiastical tradition, and their worries about the nature of the spirit directing him, partly reflect their own wish to protect the liturgy's spiritual, unified and immutable essence from any association with heterodoxy or earthly, temporal variance. As they and Amalarius clearly agreed, God's unchanging Spirit lay at the liturgy's core and behind all orthodox thought and prayer it inspired. Amalarius's teachings and the quarrel they instigated are reminders of how critical for every Carolingian churchman was the liturgy's power to put the faithful in touch with heaven.

Carolingian Diagrams, Images of the Invisible

BIANCA KÜHNEL

Among the various categories of visual representations, diagrams are closest to verbal imaging. Their primary concern is the translation of a text into a concise figuration, with the aim of facilitating the reader's access to the textual content. Thus, diagrams belong by definition to school manuals and scientific disciplines. With this approach in mind, it is not surprising that for a long time medieval diagrams were not considered as something other than technical companions to scientific texts. For the same reason they are usually evaluated according to their faithfulness (or otherwise) to the text, which would necessarily reflect a good (or a bad) understanding of the content. This premise leads to very low expectations of the diagram with respect to both artistic quality and iconographic value, which, at least to some extent, would account for the fact that medieval diagrams have been largely ignored by art historians.¹

'Ignored' requires some elucidation. It is not that diagrams have not been used by art historians; they have been introduced, especially in providing explanations or parallels to clearly geometric figural compositions. This use however is sparse and occasional, and, with a few exceptions, refers to later medieval art.² The reciprocity in the relationship between scientific and biblical

¹ B. KÜHNEL, *The End of Time in the Order of Things: Science and Eschatology in Early Medieval Art* (Regensburg, 2003), esp. pp. 13-24.

² E.g. A.C. ESMEIJER, *Divina Quaternitas: A Preliminary Study in the Method and Application of Visual Exegesis* (Amsterdam, 1978), *passim*; M.H. CAVINESS, "Images of divine order and the third mode of seeing", *Gesta* 22 (1983), pp. 99-120; E.J. BEER, *Die Rose der*

illumination has gone unnoticed; basic questions, such as was this mutual relationship inherent or intentional, meaningful or neutral, when did it begin, were there periods of greater or lesser intensity in its history, have never been addressed on a comprehensive scale. In fact, scientific manuscripts have rarely received art historical consideration *per se* (with only a few exceptions,³ and then mostly regarding manuscripts with strong figural elements).⁴

The belief that medieval scientific manuscripts (including texts and illuminations) were entirely dependent on classical sources, which thus became the measure of evaluation, has hindered *a priori* the integration of medieval diagrams into art historical research. Accordingly, the evident departures of medieval diagrams from classical texts were considered negatively; an explanation has always been sought that would return the 'rebel' diagram to its original, classical framework. A characteristic illustration is a passage in an article by Barbara Obrist on medieval wind diagrams published in *Speculum* in January 1997. In dealing with one of the earliest types of medieval wind diagrams, a circular one, exemplified by a seventh-century military text in the Vatican Library (MS Reg. lat. 2077, f. 99r; Fig. 1),⁵ and a *De natura rerum* manuscript

Kathedra von Lausanne und der kosmologische Bilderkreis des Mittelalters (Bern, 1952); A. VON EUW, "Die Maiestas-Domini-Bilder der ottonischen Kölner Malerschule im Licht des platonischen Weltbildes. Codex 192 der Kölner Dombibliothek", in: *Kaiserin Theophanu: Begegnung des Ostens und Westens um die Wende des ersten Jahrtausends: Gedenkschrift des Kölner Schnütgen-Museums zum 1000. Todesjahr der Kaiserin*, ed. A. VON EUW and P. SCHREINER (Cologne, 1991), pp. 379-398.

³ As, e.g. H. BOBER, "An illustrated medieval school-book of Bede's '*De natura rerum*'", *Journal of the Walters Art Gallery*, 19-20 (1956-1957), pp. 65-97; A. VON EUW, "Die künstlerische Gestaltung der astronomischen und komputistischen Handschriften des Westens", in: *Science in Western and Eastern Civilization in Carolingian Times*, ed. P.L. BUTZER and D. LOHRMANN (Basel, 1993), pp. 251-269.

⁴ Here belong, of course, Fritz Saxl's catalogues of astrological manuscripts in Rome, Vienna and London: F. SAXL, *Verzeichnis astrologischer und mythologischer illustrierter Handschriften des lateinischen Mittelalters*, 1, *Die Handschriften der römischen Bibliotheken* (Heidelberg, 1915: *Sitzungsberichte der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften, Phil.-hist. Kl.* 1915 Abh. 6-7); 2, *Die Handschriften der Nationalbibliothek in Wien* (Heidelberg, 1927: *Sitzungsberichte der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften, Phil.-Hist. Kl.*, 1925-1926, Abh. 2); F. SAXL and H. MEIER, *Catalogue of Astrological and Mythological Illuminated Manuscripts of the Latin Middle Ages*, vol. 3, part 1, *Manuscripts in English Libraries*, ed. H. BOBER (London, 1953).

⁵ C.R. SCHRADER, "A handlist of extant manuscripts containing the *De re militari* of Flavius Vegetius Renatus", *Scriptorium*, 33 (1979), p. 298; B. OBRIST, "Wind diagrams and medieval cosmology", *Speculum*, 72 (1997), fig. 3, pp. 43, 46, n. 71 (with further bibliography).

in Basel (MS Basel, Universitätsbibliothek, F III 15a, f. 22r; Fig. 2)⁶ from the end of the eighth century, Obrist writes:

What is striking about all of these early-medieval diagrams is that they consist of a circle with a central medallion. In opposition to the figures described by such authors as Aristotle and Vitruvius, where the centre marks the intersection point of diagonal lines, these diagrams have a central circle, which might originally have been suggested by the opening where wind flags had been placed in the centre of anemoscopes or by the compass circle. This circle was put to various symbolic uses. When left empty, it does not appear to have a specific function; but when it encloses the caption *kocmoc-mundus*, the central circle stands for the most general category encompassed by the outer circle, namely the universe. These wind diagrams stand out as the earliest medieval examples that nominally refer to the world as a whole. But there is no indication, either pictorial or verbal, as to whether winds were regarded as belonging to a specific stratum of the universe. Does the *mundus-kocmoc* caption refer to the universe in such a way as to include the celestial spheres, or to the sublunary part as a whole, or merely to the airy space? More generally, it is often not clear whether the central unit of circular diagrams simply delimits and defines a category, or whether it also has an iconic function or both – a problem that becomes a particularly vexing one as diagrams came to include, besides the categories of winds and *mundus*, more categories and subcategories ... Indeed, on a merely verbal level, the polysemy of the word *mundus* is not necessarily a help in clarifying things. It could mean the world including the heavens, or merely the sublunary part, or simply the central earth globe, or even the surface of the earth ...⁷

The effort to do justice both to scientific accuracy and to classical sources makes the cross vanish from the depiction of these diagrams, not to mention from their understanding and interpretation.⁸ Another illustration of scholarly disregard of the cross appears in the first volume of John Williams's *The Illustrated Beatus*, where a diagram of the winds is reproduced in such a way that the cross lies on its side.⁹

⁶ K. ESCHER, *Die Miniaturen in den Basler Bibliotheken* (Basel, 1917), pp. 26-27 (described as "*Liber Isidori de ordine creaturarum*"); W.M. STEVENS, "*Compotistica et astronomica* in the Fulda school", in: *Saints, Scholars and Heroes: Studies in Medieval Culture in Honour of Charles W. Jones*, ed. M.H. KING and W.M. STEVENS, 2 vols. (Collegeville, Minn., 1979), 2, pp. 27-63.

⁷ OBRIST, "Wind diagrams", pp. 48-49.

⁸ The presence of a cross shape is noticed only once, on p. 47, throughout the long article (pp. 33-84), with no commentary at all.

⁹ Although this could as well be a typographical error. See: J. WILLIAMS, *The Illustrated Beatus: A Corpus of the Illustrations of the Commentary on the Apocalypse in five volumes*,

The elimination, or, in the best of cases, minimalization of the importance of the cross as a result of a determined search for scientific accuracy and faithfulness to classical texts, is a major impediment in grasping the essence of early medieval diagrams, which are determined by an uncompromising Christian orientation. The Christian dimension of these diagrams is not a marginal decoration, but their driving force, with the cross as a key to understanding the special turn taken by ancient cosmological and computistic diagrams when migrating from the pagan to the Christian context. In fact, diagrams show in the most literal sense how the bulk of knowledge acquired from ancient sources was placed under the sign of the cross.

The dominant presence of the cross is demonstrated, even more than through the repeated appearance of the sign itself, by cruciform compositions that take hold of the entire diagram and subjugate all the data conveyed by it.

For example, in the wind diagrams mentioned above, the small crosses at the centre radiate their shape to the four cardinal directions inscribed outside the circumference. We do not have to look very far to find the sources, the exegetical basis, and thus the meanings transmitted by the visual associations between the winds and the cross. The presence of the cross in association with winds is dictated by the emphasis in Christian exegesis on the four cardinal winds among the twelve inherited from ancient sources (Aristotle's *Meteorologica* has eleven winds; a twelfth was added, possibly by Timosthenes, during the reign of Ptolemy II Philadelphus).¹⁰ The emphasizing of the four winds, as well as the correlation between winds and angels, is most probably based on Revelations (Apoc 7, 1-3):

And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree. And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea. Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.

The sign of the cross halts the destructive action of the winds; accordingly, crosses bring order, perfection and stability into diagrams.

Adopting the classical notion of the twelve winds, Isidore of Seville emphasized the four cardinal ones, turning the remaining eight into subsidiary

(London, 1994-2003), 1, p. 39.

¹⁰ OBRIST, "Wind diagrams", p. 42.

winds to flank these.¹¹ Indeed, the *rota ventorum* in the ninth-century manuscript of *De natura rerum* from Laon (MS Laon, BM, 422, f. 5v; Fig. 3)¹² illustrates this concept, also making visible the identity between winds and angelic spirits. Isidore was instrumental in equating the winds with angelic spirits, as well as in propagating the biblical idea of the salvational purpose of this identity: the winds, equated with angelical spirits, were sent to the entire world as secretaries of God, to save humanity.¹³ In a ninth-century manuscript of Beda's *De natura rerum*, attributed to Laon or Reims, today MS Trier, Stadtbibliothek, 2500, on f. 20r, the cross appears to be holding the diagram of the twelve winds (Fig. 4).¹⁴ The cardinal directions are inscribed within the flared ends of a cross that protrude behind the diagram disc. The identity between the cardinal directions and the cross is thus made unarguably visible.

Not every diagram shows all of this, or makes the same connections and associations, but we may certainly turn to them as a group in order to study the associative language used by medieval computistic diagrams. The *rota anni* and the microcosm-macrocosm scheme contribute considerably to this deciphering process.

Isidore of Seville's treatise *De natura rerum* (612-613), the 'backbone' of medieval physical science, the channel and filter through which ancient science was transmitted to the Middle Ages, contains six circular diagrams that show, in the numerous medieval copies, the same compositional principle. The set of diagrams was composed by Isidore himself and is the reason for the alternative name of the treatise: *Liber rotarum*. These diagrams not only provided a basis for scientific diagrammatic illumination during the Middle Ages and beyond, they created a model of combining scientific knowledge with Christian exegesis in a basically non-figurative environment. Isidore's textual explanations of natural phenomena move from the physical to the exegetical plane; it seems

¹¹ Isidore, *De natura rerum*, 37. 1-4, ed. and tr. J. FONTAINE, *Isidore de Séville: Traité de la nature* (Bordeaux, 1960), pp. 295-297; Isidore, *Etymologiae*, XIII, XI, 3-13, ed. W.M. LINDSAY, *Isidori Hispalensis episcopi Etymologiarum sive Originum libri XX*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1911; repr. 1985).

¹² *Catalogue général des manuscrits des bibliothèques publiques des départements de France, Départements, ancienne série*, 1, *Manuscrits de la Bibliothèque de Laon* (Paris, 1849), p. 225.

¹³ Isidore of Seville, *De natura rerum* 36. 3, ed. FONTAINE, p. 296.

¹⁴ A. VON EUW and J.M. PLOTZEK, *Die Handschriften der Sammlung Ludwig*, 4 vols. (Cologne, 1982), 3, pp. 145-153, No. XII 3; *Karolingische Beda-Handschrift aus St. Maximin* (Trier, 1990), fig. p. 19. This diagram was accurately reproduced in an eleventh-century manuscript in MS Berlin, Staatsbibliothek Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Philipps 1830, f. 3v; KÜHNEL, *The End of Time*, pp. 156-157, figs. 90, 91.

therefore reasonable to expect that the same two aspects would be linked in his diagrams.¹⁵

The *rota anni*, although placed in the seventh chapter (On the Seasons), derives its content from the sixth chapter (On the Years), while the microcosm-macrocosm scheme is the second figure accompanying Chapter 11 (On the Elements). Both diagrams are intended to make visible the concordance of many interrelated physical data, while the shape of the cross results from their arrangement.

F. 11r of a copy of Isidore's *De natura rerum*, now MS Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 16128 (Fig. 5), shows a diagram which is representative for quite a large group of similar Carolingian manuscripts.¹⁶ The circle (*anus*) of the year (*annus*) is usually inscribed with the word *annus* at the centre of the diagram. The four seasons accompanied by the corresponding cardinal directions are placed opposite each other: spring (*ver*) is equated with *oriens*, because then all things arise (*oriuntur*) from the earth. This pair of terms is placed above the central inscription *annus*. *Autumnus* is associated with *occidens*, because of serious illnesses and because the leaves fall from the trees (*occiduius* meaning setting or falling), both placed at the opposite end, under the central inscription. Summer (*aestas*) with south (*meridies*) are on the right, both having heat in common, whereas winter (*hiemps*), with the north (*septentrio*), connected by cold, are placed opposite, on the left. Each season is characterized by its primary qualities, dryness and humidity, heat and cold (*sicca, humidus, calidus, frigidus*). Since these qualities are shared by the seasons taken two by two, they serve as natural bonds (*vinculi naturales*) or common elements (*communiones*) uniting them. The seasons (*tempora*) thus derive their name from the balance (*temperamentum*) of their common qualities, as time (*tempus*) derives its name from the same balance between contrasting forces of nature. The figure communicates this message of balance by the intertwining of a set of eight half circles with a common base, the circumference of the *rota*. Each half circle comprises a season, a cardinal point and their two qualities: spring is humid and hot, autumn is dry and cold, summer is dry and hot, winter is humid and cold.

¹⁵ The treatise was written in order to provide an answer to the Visigothic King Sisebutus' question pertaining to the "nature and reasons behind phenomena and material substances", in other words to provide an explanation of the primary (or elemental) qualities whose combinations and changing proportions determine the distinctive characteristics (or nature) of things. For discussion and bibliography, see KÜHNEL, *The End of Time*, pp. 116 and *passim*.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 131-132. For the Munich manuscripts, see: K. BIERBRAUER, *Die vorkarolingischen und karolingischen Handschriften der bayerischen Staatsbibliothek* (Wiesbaden, 1990: *Katalog der illuminierten Handschriften der Bayerischen Staatsbibliothek in München* 1).

The system of eight intertwining half circles also demonstrates that each quality is shared by two seasons: humidity is divided between winter and spring, dryness between summer and autumn, heat between spring and summer, and coldness between autumn and winter. The diagram provides a simple but sophisticated way to express unity in diversity and balance, the symmetry of the colours adding to the clarity and stability emanating from the diagram.

To the year, the seasons, and their qualities, the fifth scheme adds *mundus* and *homo* at the centre and introduces the four elements (*ignis, aqua, terra, aer*) and the four humours (*colera*, red bile, *sanguis*, blood, *humor*, phlegm, and *melancolia*, black bile). Usually these *rotae* are centred around the triple inscription *mundus, annus, homo* as, for example in a manuscript from Laon (MS Laon, BM, 423, dated mid-eighth century, f. 12r; Fig. 6).¹⁷ The association of these data in one diagram is meant to illustrate a concept of ancient origin that became popular during the Middle Ages, namely that man is a small world and the world, a great man. In the microcosm-macrocosm tetradic diagram, the four elements take the place occupied in the wheels of the year by the cardinal directions. The seasons and the humours are placed at the same locations, so that in this scheme the four directions are even more clearly emphasized through a sophisticated interplay between the inscribed and the non-inscribed spaces. The diagram has either six or eight half circles, the inscriptions always being placed in a column, close to each other, in the intervals between the half circles. The parallel lines separating the inscriptions, as well as the colour distribution, further emphasize the densely covered intervals.

This emphasis on four axial directions creates the shape of a cross with flaring arms that dominates the whole figure, a common feature of all manuscripts containing the second and the fifth Isidorian diagrams. Of course, we can regard the shape of the cross in these diagrams as accidental, resulting from the arrangement of the specific components. However, a large number of direct representations of the cross displaying the same layout of crosses and circles indicate that the illuminators who consistently repeated this form in Isidorian and other computistical and astronomical manuscripts indeed had the cross in mind. For example, the Irish monumental cemetery cross in Clonmacnoise from the ninth or tenth century shows a striking similarity to our diagrams, thus documenting the link (Fig. 7).¹⁸

¹⁷ *Catalogue général des manuscrits des bibliothèques publiques des départements de France*, 1, *Manuscrits de la Bibliothèque de Laon*, p. 225; E.A. LOWE, *Codices Latini Antiquiores* 6 (Oxford, 1953), p. 19, No. 766.

¹⁸ P. HARBISON, *The High Crosses of Ireland: An Iconographical and Photographic Survey*, 3 vols. (Bonn, 1992: Römisch-Germanisches Zentralmuseum Mainz, Forschungsinstitut

An explanation for this similarity is found in the theology of the cross, a major part of which is devoted to defining the cross's role in supporting the architecture of the world and preventing its components from falling apart. The Fathers of the Church stressed the paradox of the cross's apparent lack of power and its being simultaneously the inner, invisible structure of the world, the eternal, predetermined plan of the universe. A fifth-century epistle by Isidore of Pelusium that sums up the early Christian position regarding the cosmological role played by the cross is especially evocative of the diagram of the elements discussed above:

The glorious cross is rightly named the backbone and jewel not only of the Earth, but also of Heaven. It is indeed the source of the entire Creation, the author of heavenly joy and earthly liberation, and the cause of the union between opposites'.¹⁹

John of Damascus provides a link between early Christian and medieval exegesis on this issue of the theology and adoration of the cross, summing up its main lines towards the middle of the eighth century:

The visible arms of the cross springing from a centre, point towards the godly power of the Logos on the Cross (I Cor 1, 24; Eph 3, 18), that radiates vertically and horizontally, to hold together the visible and the invisible Creation'.²⁰

This theological concept is clearly visualized in the harmonious interplay of the elements and qualities in our diagrams.

The union between diagram and cross becomes one of the most direct visual expressions of a line of thought which is basic to Christian exegesis, namely that Christ, through his Crucifixion and Resurrection (which make him the meeting point between death and life), halted in himself the decomposition of nature caused by death, and thereby exemplified the principle of the reunion of scattered elements.²¹

für Vor- und Frühgeschichte, Monographien 17.1-3), 1 (Text), p. 52; 2 (Photographic Survey), figs. 139, 141; K. VEELENTURF, *Dia Brátha: Eschatological Theophanies and Irish High Crosses* (Amsterdam, 1997: *Amsterdamse Historische Reeks, Kleine Serie 33*), Pls. VI, XVIII.

¹⁹ Isidore of Pelusium (†d. 431), *Epistola* 4, 32, ed. in: PG 78, cols. 1084D-1085A. German translation by S. HEID, *Kreuz, Jerusalem, Kosmos: Aspekte frühchristlicher Staurologie* (Münster, 2001: *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum, Ergänzungsband 31*), p. 69.

²⁰ *Expositio fidei*, 4, 11, 84, German tr. in: *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, tr. B. KOTTER, 5 vols. (Berlin and New York, 1969-1988), 2, pp. 187-188; HEID, *Kreuz, Jerusalem, Kosmos*, p. 71.

²¹ Paraphrase after Gregory of Nyssa, *Oratio catechetica magna*, 16. 9, ed. in: PG 45,

The Isidorean *rota anni*, *rota ventorum*, and the microcosm-macrocosm diagram have, as we have seen, specific exegetical reasons to associate the cross with the structure of their compositions. The mind-set that this association reveals, however, is much broader; it may be found in almost every kind of medieval scientific diagram and appears in various sorts of visual expressions. *Rotae* that from the outset were intended primarily for technical and practical uses, such as computistical discs used for the calculation of Easter, show crosses in varied, but always key, locations. A manuscript of ca. 800 from Fulda, now MS Basel, University Library, F III 15a,²² contains among several different astronomical diagrams, partly based on Isidore, partly on other texts (a typical miscellaneous school book), two computistical diagrams: one of them, f. 21v (Fig. 8), strives to offer a concordance between the solar and the lunar months over a period of nineteen years, marking a cycle of solar years to contain a whole number of lunar months. (Easter, being a movable feast obeying the lunar calendar, had to be fitted into the solar calendar adopted officially by imperial Rome and by the Christian world. Since twelve solar months contain $11\frac{1}{4}$ days more than twelve lunar months, Easter thus posed a serious problem of concordance throughout the Middle Ages.) Our diagram gives several categories of information reflecting the effort implied by coordinating various complementary data: the distinction between normal (common) years in a nineteen-year cycle and the so-called embolismic years, those containing an added lunar month; and the ages of the moon on the first day (kalends) of each month for each year of the cycle. Such a diagram was, most probably, some sort of a general basis for concrete calculations of the Easter date for any given year. Other tools were made available on other pages of the manuscript or in more portable forms, easier to adapt from year to year, for example tables showing where a year fell within the nineteen year cycle, as well as a table connecting a certain date to the days of the week.²³ A cross with flaring arms, outlined in dark brown and surrounded by reddish-brown dots is planted on top of the rota on f. 21v. On f. 21r (Fig. 9), another complementary diagram is depicted, very simple in comparison, and equally popular among early medieval computistic and astronomical manuals. This rough diagram shows the concordance between the twelve solar months and the positions of the moon at various times of the respective solar months. Above it, *Sol* is inscribed in a medallion, in exactly the same position as the cross on the verso

col. 52D. See A. LUNEAU, *L'histoire du salut chez les Pères de l'Eglise: La doctrine des âges du monde* (Paris, 1964: *Théologie historique* 2), p. 176, n. 7.

²² For bibliography on this manuscript see above, n. 6.

²³ KÜHNEL, *The End of Time in the Order of Things*, pp. 116 ff.

of the folio, the parallelism giving rise to a wealth of associations which reinforce our conviction that the appearance of the cross in diagrammatic contexts was intended and meaningful. Similar schemes are used to visualize the concordance between the twelve solar months and the zodiac signs, as, for example in the mid-ninth-century miscellany from Fleury (MS Paris, BN, lat. 5543,²⁴ f. 134v; Fig. 10), showing on which day of the respective month the new zodiac sign begins. The distinctive colouring of the cardinal months in this diagram turns them into a Greek cross with flaring arms.

I have dealt with these technicalities at some length with a purpose in mind: I wanted to show how superfluous the cross is in these examples from the point of view of their scientific content, and yet how dominant it is made by its key position or by the way it is echoed in the inner arrangement of the diagram.

The correspondence between crosses and overall compositions that adjust their components to fit the shape of the cross, sometimes leads into networks that enclose the entire diagram. This is clearly the case with the diagram showing the path of the sun through the zodiac signs, resulting in the formation of the twelve months and the four seasons, in the two sister manuscripts from Salzburg dated to the bishopric of Arno (785-821) that contain the third recension, dated 818, of the famous encyclopedia of Aachen from the year 809.²⁵ Some of the diagrams in these manuscripts were obviously inspired by the Isidorean rotae, although they show many original additions and a pronounced figural character. The diagram in the manuscript now MS Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 210 (the other one is in Vienna),²⁶ shows on f. 136r (Fig. 11) a bust of the sun god in the central medallion, surrounded by the title of the diagram: *cursus solis per signa*, running clockwise and ending in a cross. A square is inscribed within the wheel. The points where the angles of the square meet the circumference of the wheel are marked by four crosses, visible outside the diagram. The combination between circle and square, besides contributing

²⁴ M. MOSTERT, *The Library of Fleury: A Provisional List of Manuscripts* (Hilversum, 1989), pp. 9-11 and 207-208; H. BOBER, "An illustrated medieval school-book"; A. BORST, *Die karolingische Kalenderreform* (Hannover, 1998: MGH Schriften 46), pp. 492 ff.

²⁵ A. BORST, "Alkuin und die Enzyklopädie von 809", in: *Science in Western and Eastern Civilization in Carolingian Times*, pp. 53-78.

²⁶ B. BISCHOFF, *Die süddeutschen Schreibschulen und Bibliotheken in der Karolingerzeit*, 2 vols. (Wiesbaden, 1974-1980); SAXL, *Verzeichnis*, 2, *Die Handschriften der Nationalbibliothek in Wien*; P. MCGURK, "Carolingian astrological manuscripts", in: *Charles the Bald: Court and Kingdom: Papers Based on a Colloquium Held in London in April 1979*, ed. M. GIBSON and J. NELSON (Oxford, 1981: BAR International Series 101), pp. 317 ff; O. MAZAL, *Die Salzburger Dom- und Klosterbibliothek in karolingischer Zeit* (Graz, 1977: Codices manuscripti 3), esp. pp. 44-64.

to a better organization of the components and an emphasis on the cardinal directions, gains an additional dimension through the presence of the five crosses. The impression created by the geometric network of circle, square, and twenty four radial divisions is one of controlled stability and order. The crosses appear as the pillars of these qualities. True, the motions of Sol are technically responsible for day and night, the year and the seasons; however, the five discreetly but strategically placed crosses remind one of the real force behind the stability of the universe.

The same principle is made visible in the *rota planetarum*. Four crosses mark the cardinal points of the disc showing the courses of the planets around the earth, turning the two diameters into a big cross embracing the cosmos, on f. 73r (Fig. 12) of an eleventh-century miscellany manuscript now MS Dijon, BM, 448.²⁷ The names of the twelve zodiac signs are inscribed on the circumference of the disc. The difference between this planetary configuration and earlier Aratus configurations, in which it is rooted, is obvious. We may look, as *terminus comparationis*, at f. 30v of a tenth-century Aratus manuscript, now MS Boulogne-sur-Mer, BM, 188 (Fig. 13).²⁸ The miniature is based on the second book of Pliny's *Natural history*. The configuration combines a planisphere (depiction of the spherical globe of heaven on a plane) with a *planetarium* (the scheme rendering the motions of the planets through the zodiac signs). The planetary configuration scheme on f. 30v shows a system of excentric circles, each identified by a medallion with the personification of the respective planet, indicating the points of nearest approach to the earth (the perigee, *apsis*), opposite the apogees, the *apsides altissimae*, the farthest points from the earth, and the exaltations, points at which certain zodiac signs have the maximum influence on certain planets (*apsis a suo centro altissima*). The only planet which has no apogee or perigee is the moon, whose trajectory is concentric with the earth. Only five planets circle the earth, while Mercury and Venus revolve around the sun. Since this scheme is actually a superposition of many simple diagrams, the various circles intersect, unlike the Dijon wheel, which is shaped by seven concentric circles with one centre. The Boulogne *planetarium*, in contrast to Dijon 448, shows no crosses. However, even this

²⁷ Y. ZALUSKA, *Manuscrits enluminés de Dijon* (Paris, 1991: *Corpus des Manuscrits enluminés des Collections Publiques des Départements*), pp. 30-33, Pls. III, IV-IX.

²⁸ F. MÜTHERICH, "Die Bilder", in: *Aratea: Kommentar zum Aratus des Germanicus*, Ms. Voss.Lat. Q. 79, *Bibliotheek der Rijksuniversiteit Leiden*, Commentary vol. (Lucerne, 1989), p. 33; B.S. EASTWOOD, "Origins and contents of the Leiden planetary configuration (MS Voss. Q. 79, f. 93v), an artistic astronomical schema of the early Middle Ages", *Viator*, 14 (1983), pp. 1-40, esp. p. 25.

manuscript, obviously closer to classical models than the eleventh-century Dijon miscellany, is accompanied by four Isidorean *rotae* arranged in an X-form with respect to the central medallion, thus creating a five-circle scheme. The upper left disc shows the five latitudinal zones of the earth, three habitable and two not, arranged like the petals of a flower around a central disc. The lower left disc shows the paths and the durations of the sun's visibility in three circles, equinoctial, summer, and winter, derived from Martianus Capella. The lower right disc has a square, the *mundus quadrangulus*, with an inscribed, round T-O map of the earth at the centre of a disc with twelve radial segments for the winds. The upper right disc is basically derived from Isidore's *De natura rerum*, chapter 23, presenting the paths of the planets, but with new numerical values, not yet identified, for the courses of moon, Mercury, Venus, and sun. Notwithstanding the relatively great variety in content displayed by the astronomical-computistic diagrams based on the five-circle pattern, they have a common denominator: the comprehensive representation of the cosmos and of the complementary forces responsible for its harmonious working and stability, suggested by the cruciform composition.

I propose then that the great variety of compositional and other solutions used in incorporating the shape of the cross in astronomical and computistic diagrams demonstrates the permanent presence of the cross in the medieval scientific context, which leads us to the question of its particular significance in this context.

Let me summarize the possible answers, some of which have been raised here, or implied.

There is always a possibility that the shape of the cross resulted accidentally from the arrangement of various components. Even if intentional, the shape of the cross could have functioned merely as an identifying stamp or the bearer of a general benefactory or apotropaic sign. None of these possible interpretations is specific to the scientific context. A cross shape underlying a diagram of natural phenomena, especially those that have an established pagan tradition and a strong pagan interpretative potential (such as the movements of the planets in general and those of the sun in particular), could plausibly bear a polemical and declarative character, aiming to demonstrate who was the real master of nature.

But there is more to it. We shall try to search for a deeper meaning in Carolingian diagrams with the help of a sophisticated and explicit example. MS Vatican, BAV, Vat. lat. 645 is a computistical miscellany dated to the ninth century that has been associated with the two sister manuscripts from Salz-

burg.²⁹ However, unlike them, the Vatican miscellany is accompanied by only a few diagrams, two of which contain figures that have no parallel in other computistical manuscripts. One, a wind diagram, is located on f. 66r (Fig. 14). In the centre a seated figure of *ADA(M)* is depicted, surrounded by animals, a scene easy to recognize as Adam giving names to the animals, according to Gn 2, 19. Personifications of the twelve winds, identified by inscriptions, surround the Adam clipeus symmetrically, their feet emerging from clouds arranged in such a way as to constitute an additional, external circle. The personifications address themselves to the central image with the turn of their bodies and the direction of their heads, hands, and trumpets. While all the personifications blow a trumpet, the cardinal winds at the cardinal points are further distinguished by their wings.

The association of the *vocatio animalium*, rarely depicted in medieval art,³⁰ with the twelve winds in a *rota* of a computistical manuscript is unique, as is also the emblematic depiction of the Genesis scene. Adam is seated frontally and majestically on a rock, clad in an imperial mantle with a *fibula*, his long hair falling evenly on his shoulders, hands open in benediction (right) and acceptance (left). He is flanked by two trees in the upper part of the medallion, and docile birds and animals in the lower part. The composition recalls early Christian catacomb depictions of Orpheus, the Good Shepherd, or of Christ as, for example in the mosaic of the Galla Placidia lunette in Ravenna.³¹ The association between Adam and the winds, especially in a representation that emphasizes the four cardinal winds by giving them wings, evidently refers to St. Augustine's treatise on the Gospel of John. There Augustine speaks of Adam, forever spread throughout the world, since if one takes the first letters of the Greek names for the four parts of the world (*quatuor partium mundi*), east, west, north, and south, that is, the whole world (*quod est totus orbis*), one obtains the name Adam (Anatol, Dysis, Arctos, Mesembria).³² The source of this acrostic is the apocryphal Book of the Secrets of Enoch (II Enoch), originally written in Greek: "And I gave him a name from the four substances, the east, the west, the north and the south".³³ The acrostic was known in Ireland in

²⁹ KÜHNEL, *The End of Time*, pp. 169 ff.

³⁰ X. MURATOVA, "Adam donne leurs noms aux animaux", *Studi medievali* 18.2 (1977), pp. 381-394, Pl. 7.

³¹ F.W. DEICHMANN, *Ravenna, Hauptstadt des spätantiken Abendlandes*, 2, *Kommentar*, 1st part (Wiesbaden, 1974), esp. pp. 72-75.

³² *Tractatus in Iohannis Evangelium*, 10. 12, ed. R. WILLEMS, *Sancti Aurelii Augustini in Iohannis Evangelium Tractatus CXXIV* (Turnhout, 1954: CCSL 36), p. 108.

³³ "2 (Slavonic Apocalypse) Enoch 30. 13", in: *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. J.H. CHARLESWORTH, 2 vols. (Garden City, NY, 1983), 1, p. 152 (tr. F.I. ANDERSEN).

the seventh century, as attested in the *Liber de ordine creaturarum*, an ambitious and comprehensive study of the natural and supernatural universe, written between 655-700,³⁴ and it was most probably from Ireland, perhaps via Alcuin, that it reached the Carolingian court. However, it is possible that the representation was entirely based on Augustine, who makes the same association between Adam and the four parts of the world in his commentaries on the Psalms as well (Einhard tells us that Augustine's works were much loved by Charlemagne, who had extracts read aloud at court after dinner). In his *Enarrationes in Psalmos* (95. 10-15), Augustine establishes a connection between the apocalyptic vision of Christ gathering his elected from the four winds "with a great sound of a trumpet", according to Matthew (Mt 24, 31), and Adam who is spread throughout the entire world according to the Greek alphabet. Christ will gather the pieces from all over the world and fuse them in the fire of love, thus bringing together what has been broken apart.³⁵ The trumpets and the transformation of four of the winds into angels in this extraordinary miniature evoke an additional association, with Revelation 7:1-3. Four angels stand at the four corners of the world, holding the four winds, so that the angel who comes from the east can seal the just before the beginning of the end. Adam's act of giving names to the animals is thus paralleled to the sealing of the just before the Judgment.

The identity between Adam and Christ in effect reflects the equation between salvation and creation, which is a *locus communis* in Christian exegesis, both eastern and western, and in Christian art. Herbert Kessler emphasized this in his discussion of the Genesis iconography in the Carolingian Bibles of Tours.³⁶ One of the earliest sources of this line of thought seems to be a sentence in Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians 1: 10, speaking of the recapitulation of all things in Christ.³⁷ The notion of recapitulation has engaged exegetes from

³⁴ Ed. in: PL 83, cols. 913-954; *Liber de Ordine Creaturarum: Un Anónimo Irlandés del Siglo VII*, ed. and tr. M.C. DÍAZ Y DÍAZ (Santiago de Compostela, 1972), esp. p. 168; M. SMYTH, *Understanding the Universe in Seventh-Century Ireland* (Woodbridge, 1996: *Studies in Celtic History* 15), esp. pp. 22 and 281-282.

³⁵ *Sancti Aurelii Augustini Enarrationes in Psalmos*, ed. E. DEKKERS and J. FRAIPONT, eds., 3 vols. (Turnhout, 1956: CCSL 38-40), 2, p. 1352. See also: A. GRILLMAIER, *Der Logos am Kreuz* (Munich, 1956), p. 95.

³⁶ H.L. KESSLER, *Illustrated Bibles from Tours* (Princeton, NJ, 1977: *Studies in Manuscript Illumination* 7). On the broader implications of this association in Carolingian art, see: ID., "Facies bibliothecae revelata": Carolingian art as spiritual seeing", in: *Testo e immagine nell'Alto Medioevo*, 2 vols. (Spoleto, 1994: *Atti delle Settimane di Studio del Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo* 41), 2, pp. 533-594, esp. pp. 548 ff.

³⁷ J.-M. DUFORT, "La recapitulation paulinienne dans l'exégèse des Pères", *Sciences ecclésiastiques*, 12 (1960), pp. 21-38. See also: G.B. LADNER, *The Idea of Reform, Its Impact on*

Irenaeus until the modern period.³⁸ A section in the third book of Irenaeus' *Adversus haereses* is devoted to the recapitulation doctrine,³⁹ as part of the discussion of the first sign given by God of the salvation he intends to operate, namely the virgin birth of Christ.⁴⁰ This miraculous nativity is paralleled with Adam's birth from the virgin land, to emphasize the idea that recapitulation is by no means new creation. The first Adam contained all men to come; the second Adam recapitulates all peoples, all languages, and Adam himself. The mystery of salvation is associated with the first creation, being conceived as the goal towards which creation was oriented from the very beginning.⁴¹ Christ is invested with the image and similitude of God that had been lost in Adam.⁴²

This line of thinking can of course be traced into the Carolingian period. From the multitude of relevant sources, I would quote only two, first because they are by Alcuin and Hrabanus Maurus, two prominent and representative Carolingian thinkers, secondly because both these sources have to do with the cross, so that they bring us to the conclusion of this paper by completing the argument with which we started.

In a *titulus* written to honour crosses and images of the cross in a church in Salzburg, Alcuin sums up the cycle of sin and salvation and the parallel between Adam and Christ through the tree of Paradise: "Adam closed Paradise through the touch of the tree, and through the tree of the cross Christ opened Olympus".⁴³ The figure accompanying Poem 12 of Hrabanus Maurus' *De laudibus sanctae crucis* (814-831)⁴⁴ shows the Greek letters spelling AΔAM

Christian Thought and Action in the Age of the Fathers, rev. edn. (New York, 1967), esp. pp. 49 ff.; M. BARTH, *Ephesians* (Garden City, NY, 1974).

³⁸ E. SCHARL, *Recapitulatio mundi: Der Rekapitulationsbegriff des Heiligen Irenäus und seine Anwendung auf die Körperwelt* (Freiburg i. Br., 1941).

³⁹ *S. Irenaei Episcopi Lugdunensis et Martyris Contra Haereses*, 3. 21. 10-23. 8, ed. in: *PG* 7, cols. 954-965; see also: Irénée de Lyon, *Contre les hérésies*, *Livre III*, ed. and tr. A. ROUSSEAU and L. DOUTRELEAU, 2 vols. (Paris, 1974: SC 210-211), 2, pp. 431 ff.

⁴⁰ The second sign being the return of Jonah from the "belly of Hell".

⁴¹ DUFORT, "La récapitulation paulinienne", p. 27, n. 27, with mention of references in Irenaeus.

⁴² *S. Irenaei Episcopi Lugdunensis et Martyris Contra Haereses*, 3. 18-21, ed. in: *PG* 7, esp. col. 945; Irénée de Lyon, *Contre les hérésies*, *Livre III*, ed. and tr. ROUSSEAU and DOUTRELEAU, pp. 343 ff.

⁴³ Alcuin, *Carmina*, No. 109 (10): "Per tactum ligni paradisum clauserat Adam, Perque crucis lignum Christus reseravit Olimpum", ed. E. DÜMMLER, *Poetae Latini aevi Carolini* (1) (Hannover, 1881: MGH PP 1), p. 337. English tr. after: C.M. CHAZELLE, *The Cross, the Image and the Passion in Carolingian Thought and Art*, PhD diss. 1985 (Ann Arbor, 1990), p. 52.

⁴⁴ Ed. in: *PL* 107, cols. 133-294; H.G. MÜLLER, *Hrabanus Maurus, De laudibus sancta[e] crucis* (Düsseldorf, 1973: Beihefte zum "Mittelateinischen Jahrbuch" 11).

placed so as to mark out the four arms of the cross.⁴⁵ In the *declaratio* explaining the significance of the motifs used to form this cross-image, Hrabanus Maurus justifies the setting of Adam's name "in the figure and form of the holy cross" by arguing that the first man was "the form of the future Christ".⁴⁶

The meeting between this concept and the medieval theology of nature is witnessed by Johannes Scotus Eriugena, author of *Periphyseon* (*De divisione naturae*), of 864-866, a "major contribution towards a rational understanding of the nature of things".⁴⁷ In his systematic formulation of the theory of return in Book 5, Eriugena seeks arguments for the return theory in "the sensibles of nature", meaning "the heavenly sphere of the fixed stars, which is perpetually revolving and returns to its original position every twenty-four hours". Eriugena describes the four year equinoctial circuit of the sun and the monthly circuit of the moon, as well as the full circuits of the moon in nineteen years and of the sun in twenty-eight (with a total of 532 years for both, marking the Great Year, the fulfilment of the complete Paschal Cycle), concluding that "the natural laws governing the revolutions of the two great luminaries provide sufficient evidence of the doctrine being affirmed" (the doctrine of return). Not only cyclical nature, but also the Christian concept of history is reflected in this theory of return: man's fall leads to man's redemption, to return and unification with God until creature and Creator cannot be separated from each other.⁴⁸ Redemption means man's return to his first life ("in primam vitam"), to the angelic status which he deserted ("in angelicum statum quem deseruit"), and to the original status of his creation ("in pristinum suae conditionis statum").

Why, according to Eriugena, is the return necessary in the order of things? He answers: because all created things would be destroyed without a return; since the created world contains the image of the deity, God would not permit his image to come to nothing.⁴⁹ The return is operated by both nature and

⁴⁵ MS Vienna, Nationalbibliothek, Cod. 652, f. 17v. The ninth-century manuscript was published in facsimile: Hrabanus Maurus, *Liber de laudibus sanctae crucis*, *Codex Vindobonensis 652 der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek Wien: Vollständige Faksimile-Ausgabe* (Graz, 1972: *Codices Selecti*); see also CHAZELLE, *The Cross*, fig. 21.

⁴⁶ Ed. in: *PL* 107, col. 197A.

⁴⁷ J.J. O'MEARA, *Eriugena* (Oxford, 1988), p. 29. There also, pp. 80-154, an English summary of the treatise. A complete English translation by Sheldon-Williams and O'Meara was published in 1987, see: *Eriugena, Periphyseon (The Division of Nature)*, tr. I.P. SHELDON-WILLIAMS (Washington, DC, 1987: *Cahiers d'Études Médiévales, Cahier Spécial 3*).

⁴⁸ O'MEARA, *Eriugena*, p. 142.

⁴⁹ S. GERSH, "The structure of the return in Eriugena's *Periphyseon*", in: *Begriff und Metapher: Sprachform des Denkens bei Eriugena: Vorträge des VII. Internationalen Eriugena-Colloquiums, 26-29. Juli, 1989*, ed. W. BEIERWALTES (Heidelberg, 1990: *Abhandlungen der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften, Phil.-Hist. Kl.*, 1990 Abh. 3), p. 111.

grace.⁵⁰ Eriugena explains the need for the combination of these two factors when discussing the resurrection. In natural terms, the resurrection means the return of the four physical elements to the body from wherever they were scattered through death. But if the resurrection depended only upon nature, there would be no need for a redeemer; and “if the resurrection depended upon grace alone, the natural power and the vital motion of living things would be redundant”.⁵¹

This concept concisely reflects the marriage between science and religion in Christian thought, making the scientific diagram combined with a cross into a most appropriate medium to express the theological link between Creation and Salvation. Eriugena’s formulation also tells us why, when dealt with by Christians, the repeated phenomena of nature cannot simply amount to endless cycles. They must have an axis and a direction. In medieval thought and practice, nature is not an issue separated from history, since the same God created the natural world and freed it from historical sin through his son. Christian time thus moves between the two (superimposed) poles of Creation and Salvation.

Although the seeds of this thought are manifest in Christian art from Late Antiquity onwards, the diagram began to be systematically mobilized to express theological concepts only in the early medieval West. In fact, this union between scientific diagram and theology is one of the most original contributions of the early medieval period to the visual arts. In order to be able to stop measuring Carolingian diagrams according to scientific standards alone and to start looking for their *interpretatio christiana*, we have to keep in mind that the Carolingian *renovare* did not come alone but was accompanied by *ac rescribere*, that it addressed the early Christian era and the early Holy Fathers more than the Roman Empire and classical writings (as held, for example, by Panofsky⁵²). As we have seen, medieval diagrams never attempted to make faithful copies of ancient sources but were rather intent on improving, correcting, and modifying them, with one aspiration in mind: to transcend classical culture and to maintain, disseminate, and purify the Christian religion, as the work of salvation in all its aspects. This was an approach shared by science and exegesis, which obliges us to evaluate medieval diagrams – as any other motif, iconographical or stylistic – according to their makers’ own aims and measures, and not according to classical categories.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, n. 24, and O’MEARA, *Eriugena*, p. 150.

⁵¹ GERSH, *loc. cit.*

⁵² E. PANOFSKY, *Renaissance and Renascences in Western Art* (New York, 1960).

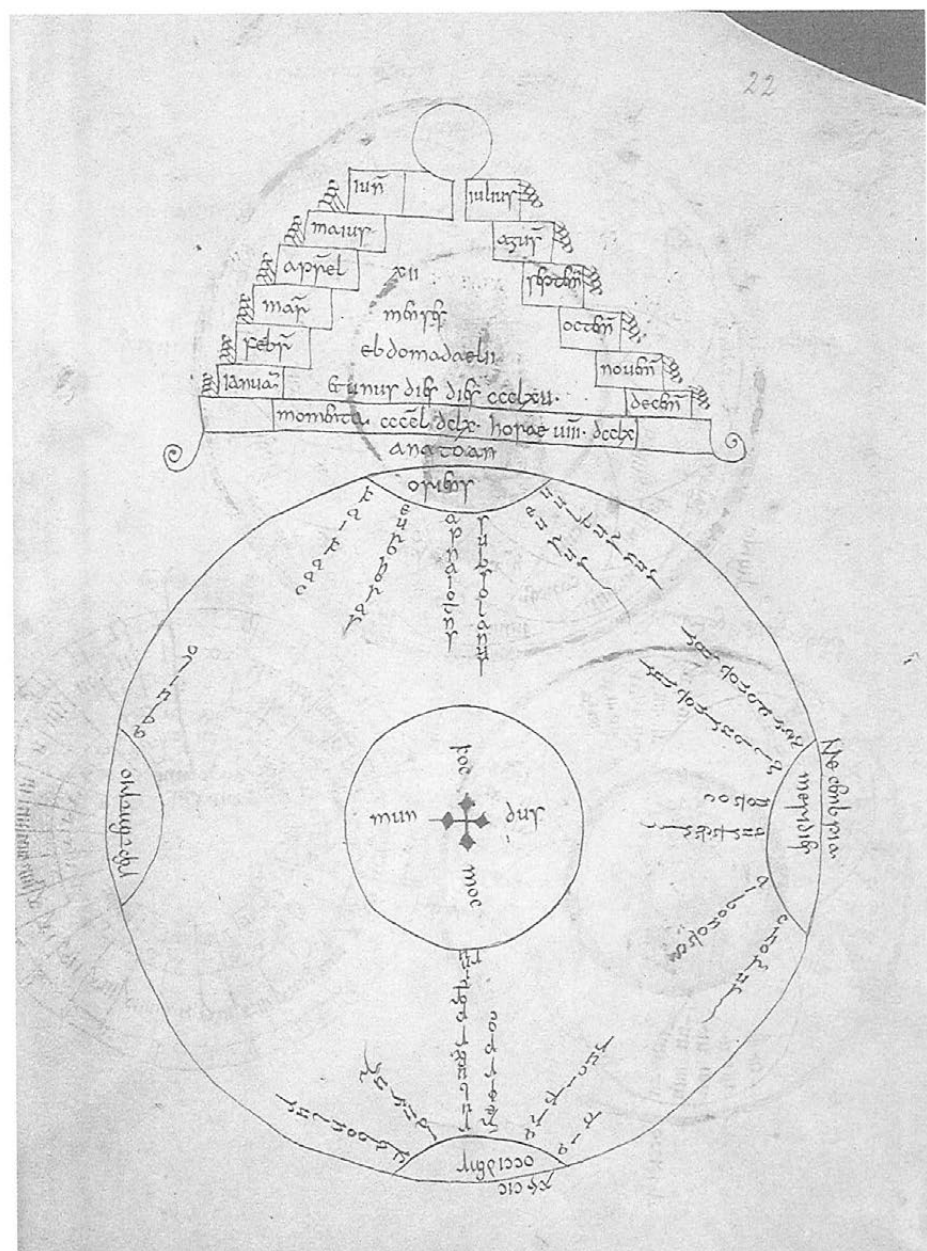


Fig. 2 MS Basel, University Library, Ms F III 15a, f. 22r

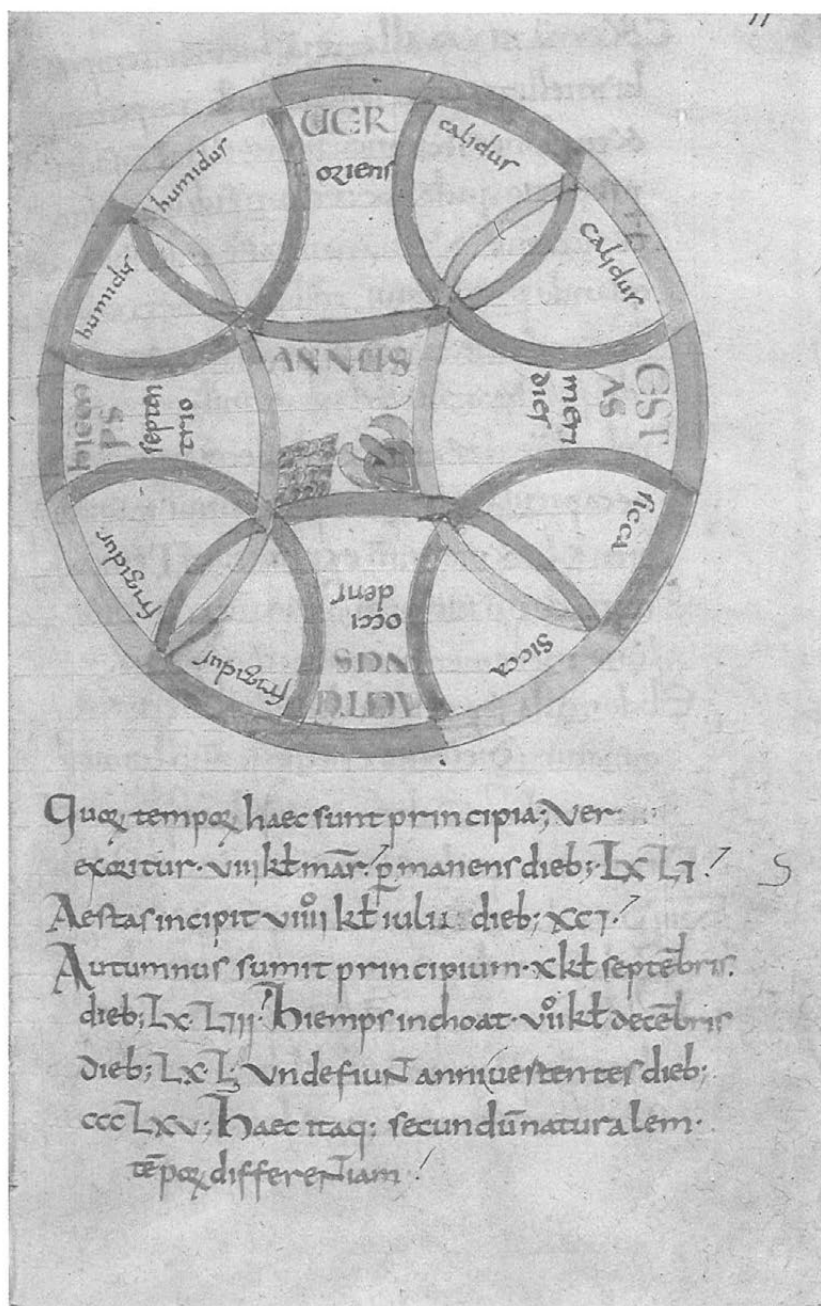


Fig. 5 MS Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 16128, f. 11r

bonum dicitur. Ignis quoque cum sit cali-
 dus & sic cum calore utitur. & nec igitur.
 Sic etiam cum in communione. & per
 sociam utitur. Iam sibi per hunc
 eum quasi per quendam eorum boni
 utitur. Societas. Bonum dicitur. unde & igitur
 et otia dicitur. quod est. & igitur. et in
 eum vocatur. & igitur. sibi bonum dicitur.
 & bonum dicitur. quod est. & igitur. com-
 munionem. & igitur. & igitur. & igitur.

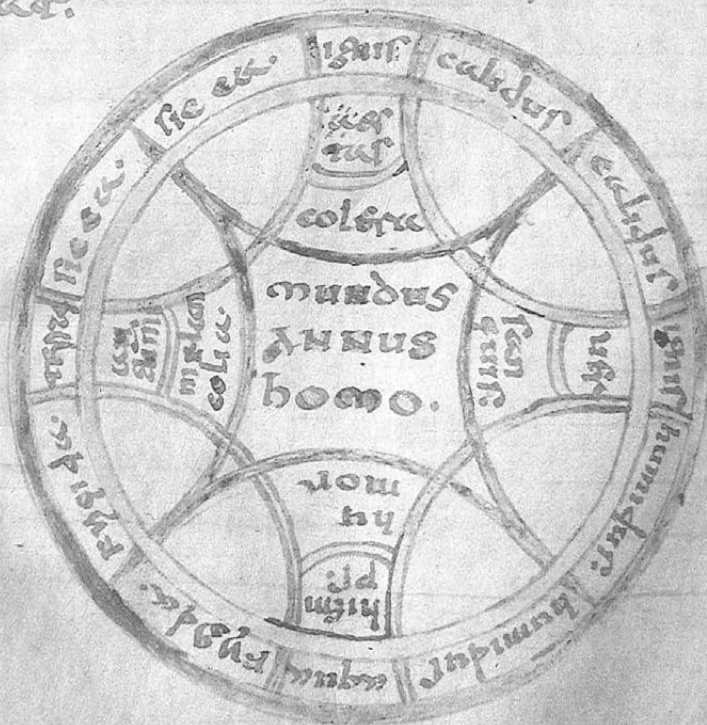


Fig. 6 MS Laon, BM, 423, f. 12r



Fig. 7 Clonmacnoise, cemetery cross

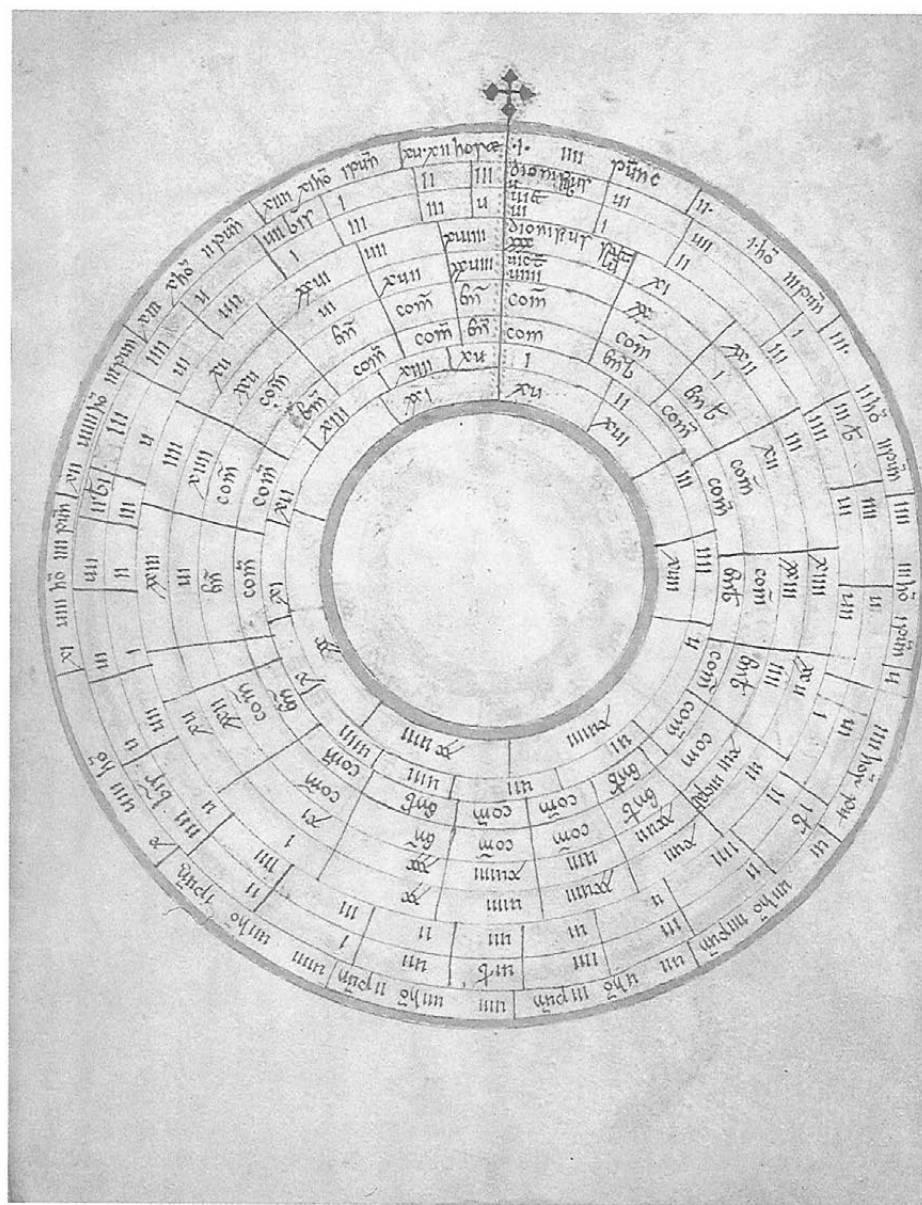
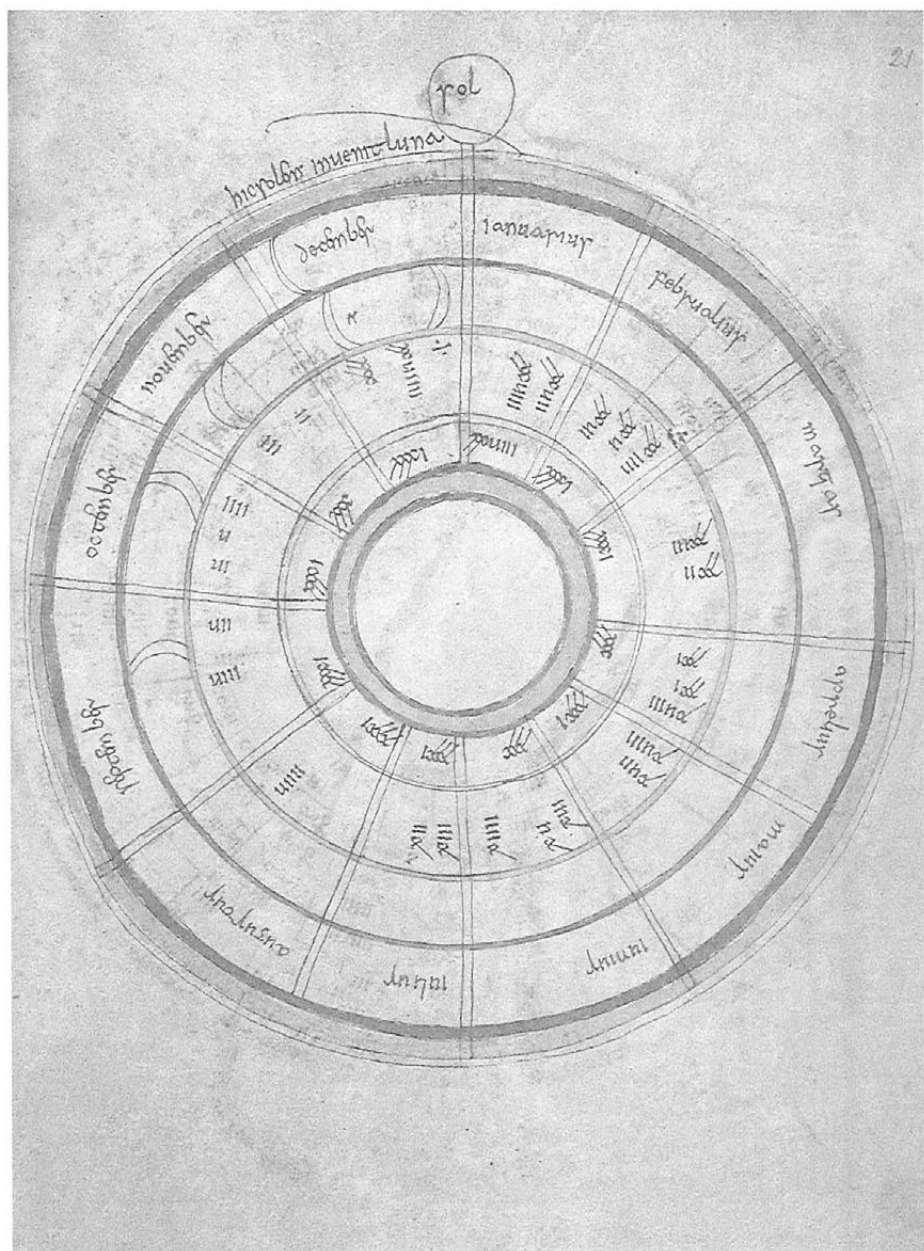


Fig. 8 MS Basel, University Library, Ms F III 15a, f. 21v

Fig. 9 *Ibid.*, f. 21r

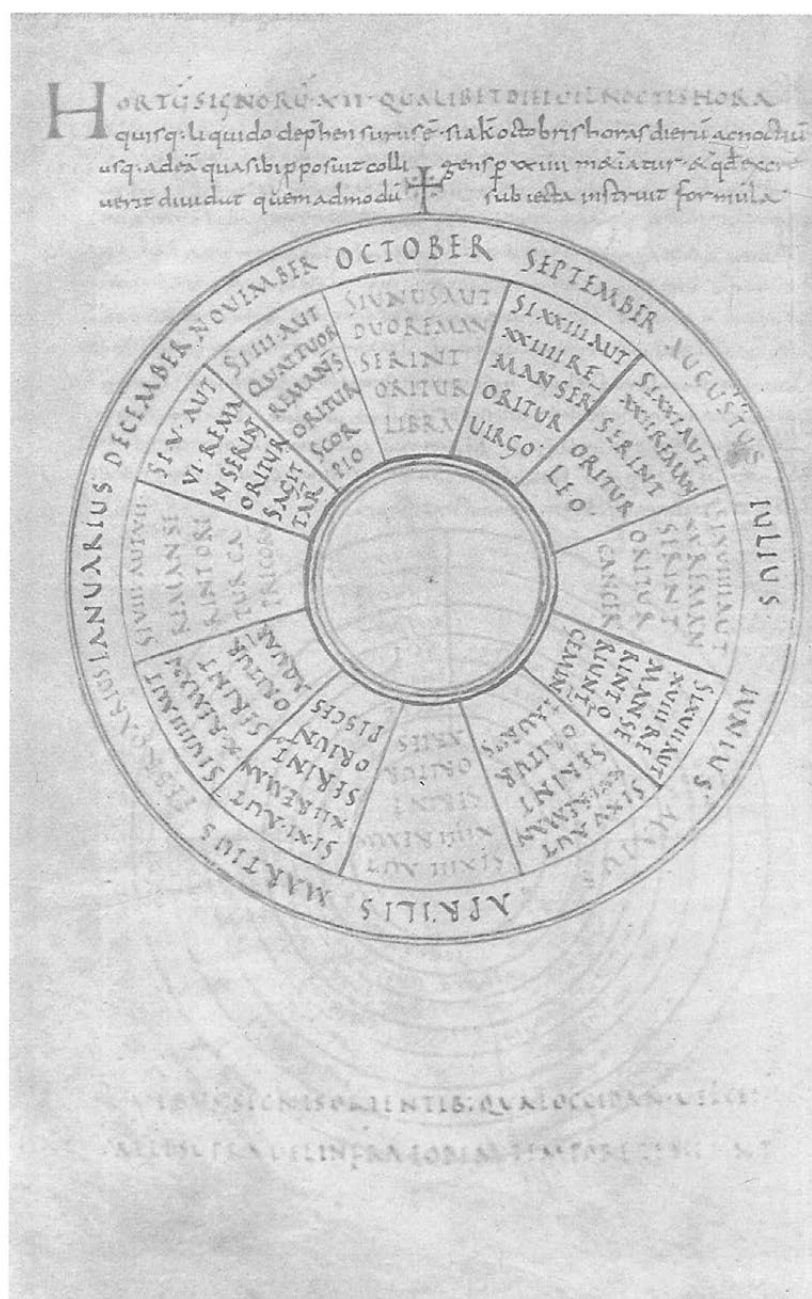


Fig. 10 MS Paris, BN 5543, f. 134v

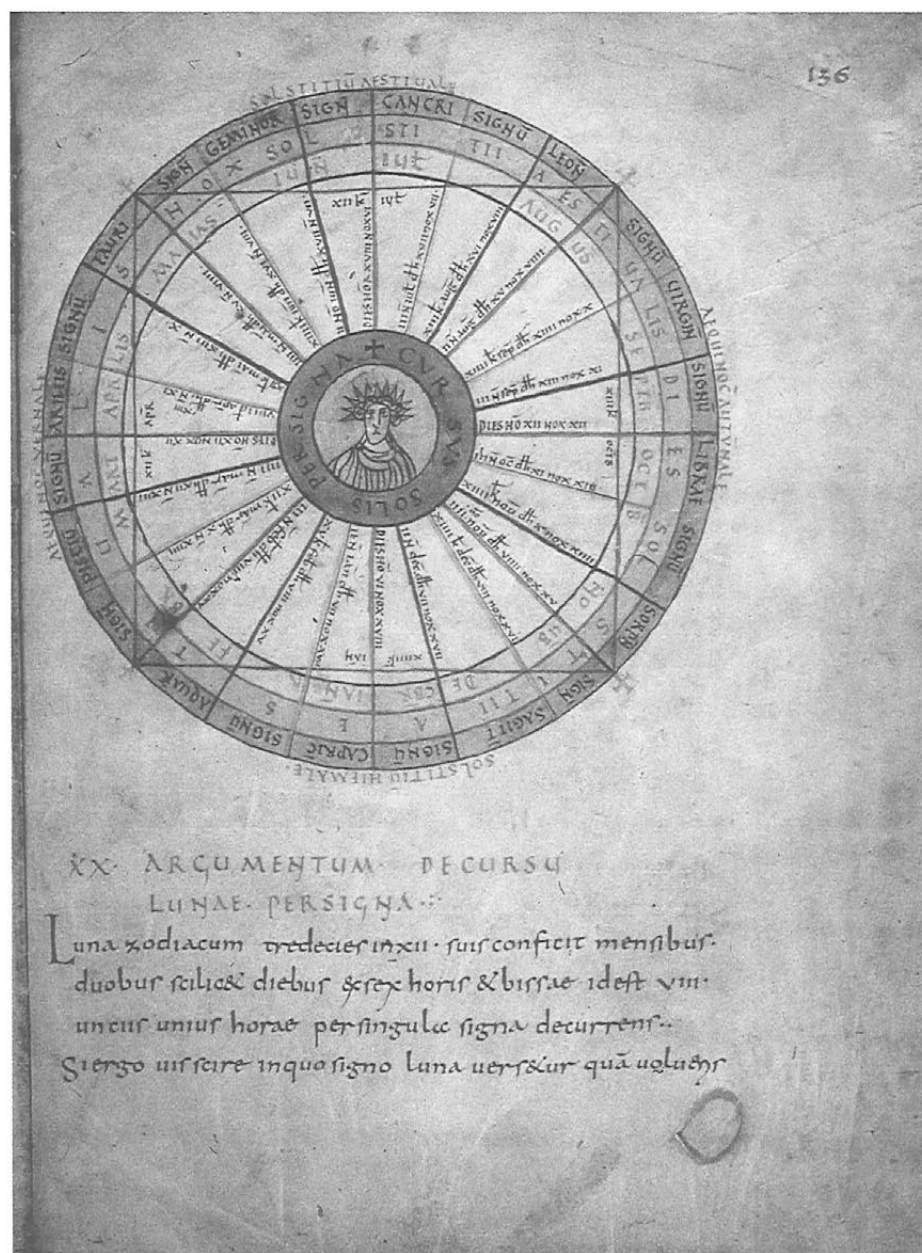


Fig. 11 MS Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 210, f. 136r

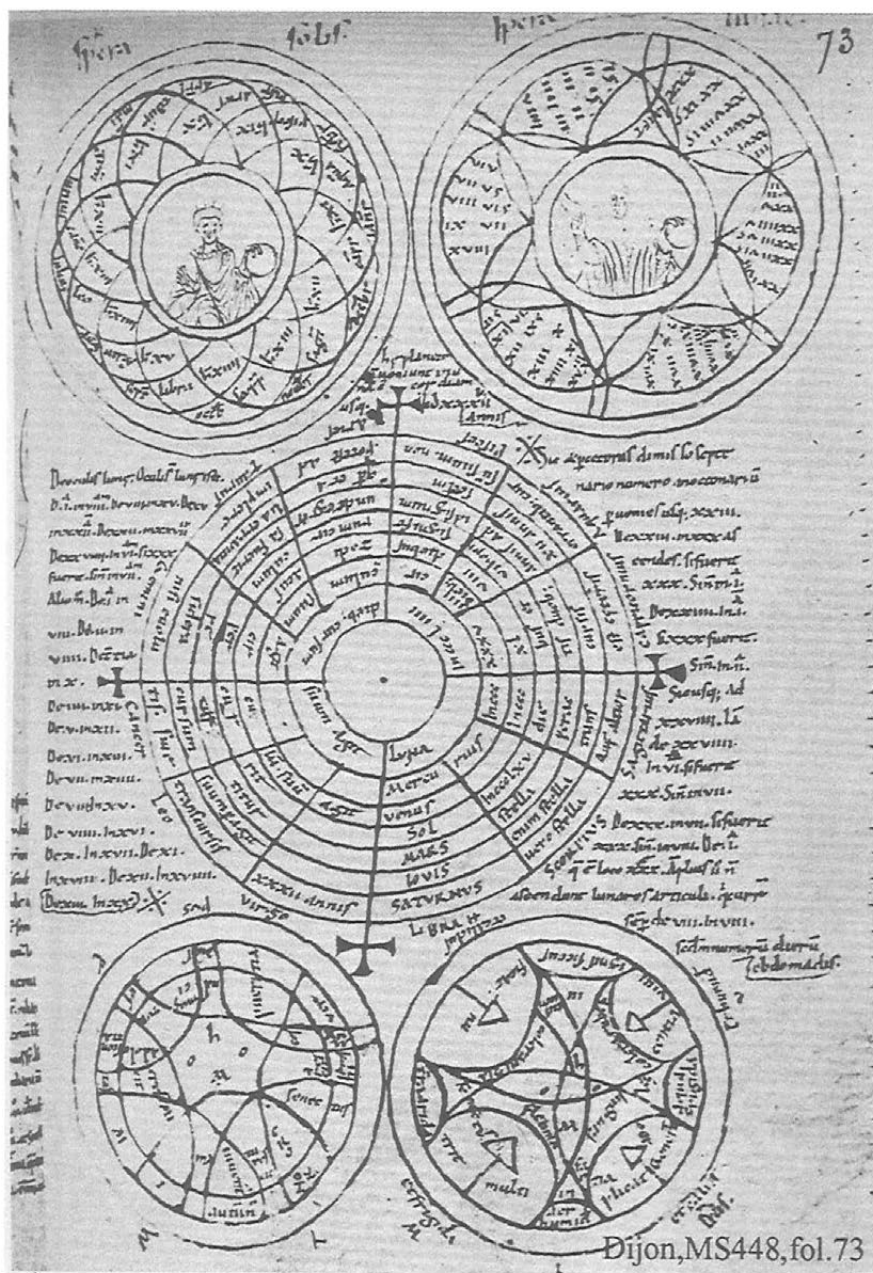


Fig. 12 MS Dijon, BM, 448, f. 73r

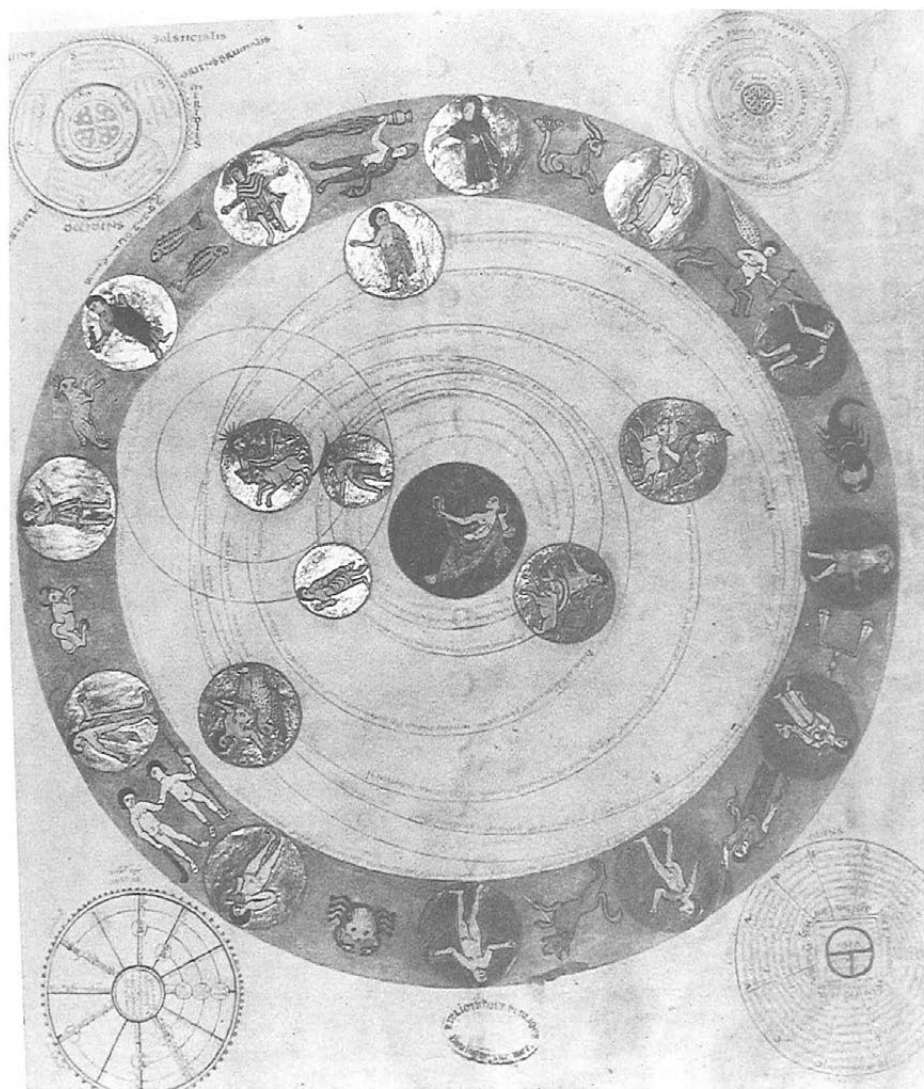


Fig. 13 MS Boulogne-sur-Mer, BM, 188, f. 30r



Fig. 14 MS Vatican, BAV, Vat. Lat. 645, f. 66r

The City Built in Heaven

SABINE MACCORMACK

Introduction

The city of my title is the one imagined by Beatus of Liébana in his commentary on the Apocalypse, written in the monastery of San Martín in the valley of Liébana in Northern Spain around the year 786.¹ The manuscript he produced – now lost – may already have been illuminated. But with the exception of one fragment of the late ninth century from the monastery of Santo Domingo de Silos, the twenty-six illuminated copies of Beatus' work that survive in whole or in part date from the mid-tenth to the thirteenth cen-

¹ For "the City built in Heaven", cf. Plato, *Republic* book 9, 592 AB. I cite the edition by E. ROMERO-POSE, *Sancti Beati a Liebana Commentarius in Apocalypsin*, 2 vols. (Rome 1985: *Scriptores Graeci et Latini Consilio Academiae Lynceorum editi*) [hereafter *Beatus*]. A more recent edition is by J. GONZALEZ ECHEGARAY, A. DEL CAMPO and L.G. FREEMAN, *Obras completas de Beato de Liébana* (Madrid 1995: *Biblioteca de autores cristianos*). Romero-Pose notes in the margins the page numbers of the *editio princeps* by H. FLÓREZ (Madrid, 1770), and of the edition by H.A. SANDERS (Rome, 1930). Sadly, the Madrid edition of 1995 omits these numbers. For this reason, and because Beatus did not subdivide his twelve books into chapters, correlating these two editions is laborious. For the date of writing the *Tractatus de Apocalypsin*, see *Beatus* book IV (*Beatus* 1, p. 608), where he gives as his time of writing era 824, and the year of the incarnation 786. For Beatus' dates and his monastery, see J. GONZÁLEZ ECHEGARAY in *Obras completas de Beato de Liébana* pp. XIV-XVI; J. WILLIAMS, *The Illustrated Beatus: A Corpus of the Illustrations of the Commentary on the Apocalypse*, 1, *Introduction* (London, 1994), pp. 13-17. This is the first volume of Williams' monumental survey of all the extant manuscripts of Beatus' *Apocalypse* in five volumes. On the illustrated MSS, and the relationship of the MSS among each other, see WILLIAMS, *Introduction* pp. 21-26; 76.

ture.² Beatus divided the entire text of the Apocalypse into sixty-eight sections or *storiae* commenting on each *storia* in turn. The *storia* is the quoted text of the Apocalypse. Most of these *storiae* begin with a heading, inserted by Beatus, pointing to the aspect of the passage in question that he was primarily interested in. Beatus' commentary that follows after each *storia* is usually preceded by another heading: "The explanation of the above mentioned *storia* begins", and concludes with the words, "The explanation of the above mentioned *storia* ends". The artists who illustrated Beatus' text, following these leads, created images to illustrate the *storiae*, most especially those aspects of them that Beatus had highlighted in his headings.

As a result, the extant twenty-six illustrated Beatus manuscripts, although not identical, form a clearly recognizable group that stands apart from other illustrated Apocalypses. On occasion, Beatus' illustrators created images referring to passages in his commentary that had no direct reference to the text of the Apocalypse and that therefore occur in no other illuminated Apocalypse manuscripts. These images include the Ark of Noah to expound Beatus' ideas on the unity and diversity of the Church, a map of the world to illustrate his account of the worldwide preaching of the Apostles, and a flourishing palm tree serving as a figurative depiction of the blessed lives of the elect in the heavenly city.³ In more general terms, Beatus' illustrators as a group focused on such episodes in both the text of the Apocalypse and in the commentary as shed light

² See P.K. KLEIN, *Der ältere Beatus-Kodex Vitr. 14-I der Biblioteca Nacional zu Madrid. Studien zur Beatus – Illustration und der spanischen Buchmalerei des 10. Jahrhunderts* (Hildesheim and New York, 1976), pp. 83–85, for a list and classification of manuscripts, now discussed and modified by WILLIAMS, *The Illustrated Beatus* 1, pp. 22–23, 26 (stemmata), pp. 27–29 (list of MSS and illustrations) and pp. 50–51. Williams discusses the relationships between all *Beatus* codices.

³ For the Ark of Noah see below at nn. 36–38 and *Beatus* 1, pp. 421–435, with MS New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, M 644 (see J. WILLIAMS, *The Illustrated Beatus*, 2, *A Corpus of the Illustrations of the Commentary on the Apocalypse: The Ninth and Tenth Centuries* (London, 1994), No. 2), f. 79; this codex, now in the Morgan Library, was produced for the monastery of San Miguel de Escalada, and I refer to it in the text as the Escalada codex. See also the Gerona codex (WILLIAMS, *The Illustrated Beatus*, 2, No. 6), ff. 102v–103r. This codex, now preserved in the cathedral of Gerona, comes from the monastery of San Salvador de Tábara. To avoid confusing the reader, but contrary to convention, I will in the text refer to these two codices by their origin, not by their present location. In the footnotes, however, I follow convention and describe the codex of 975 from San Salvador de Tábara as "MS Gerona", and the Escalada codex as "MS Morgan 644". For the *Mappa Mundi* see *Beatus* 1, pp. 186–193, with MS Morgan M 644 ff. 33v–34r; MS Gerona ff. 54v–55r. For the palm tree, see *Beatus* 1, pp. 661–665 with MS Morgan M 644 f. 131; MS Gerona f. 147v. A significant proportion of the other *Beatus* codices also contain these images; in most instances, where these images are missing, the cause appears to be lost folios.

on the meaning of cities and the human lives that were – for better or worse – lived in them. It was by means of this imagery, both verbal and visual, that Beatus and his illustrators created a representation of the city in heaven out of the diverse components of cities on earth. Explaining how precisely this task was accomplished is the concern of this paper.

Beatus and his illustrators made their case in stages and cumulatively, usually presenting several strands of thinking alongside each other. These strands can only be separated to a certain degree. As will be seen, components of the verbal and pictorial concept of the city built in heaven are present from the beginning, but at the same time this concept evolves and expands gradually in both text and image. The argument of this paper pursues four different aspects of this evolution.

To begin with, Beatus was deeply preoccupied with events and circumstances of his time, but referred to them allusively and by reference to signs that he derived from his reading of Scripture. He was not interested in discursive, expository explanations of historical events and processes. This is a characteristic that he shares with those who did write about historical events of the period broadly conceived, beginning with Isidore of Seville in the later sixth and continuing to the chroniclers of the tenth century. All these record keepers of events both past and current wrote concise and summary narratives. Conceptual schemes that might help to explain these events are referred to indirectly and allusively. Hence, I adduce the allusive, abbreviated style of writing espoused by an anonymous chronicler from Spain who was a near contemporary of Beatus, in order to describe Beatus' understanding of signs.

Second, throughout his commentary, Beatus kept returning to the number seven as deployed in the Apocalypse in order to convey patterns of meaning that must ultimately elude the resources of discursive prose, and indeed of language. In Beatus' footsteps, the painters who illustrated the *storiae* created images to accompany both the Apocalypse itself and the commentary, on occasion attaining a clarity and precision that far outpace these two texts. Third, the Apocalypse, Beatus' commentary and the pictorial language of his illustrators are pervaded by allusions to and images of cities derived from ancient and late antique antecedents. In the Apocalypse itself, there are not only the cities of the seven churches of Asia to which John was to deliver messages, but also Babylon, Jerusalem, and several unnamed cities that undergo the trials of the last days. As understood by Beatus and his illustrators, so I try to show, these cities are signs, anticipations of the as yet invisible heavenly city. The difficulty that Beatus – and also his illustrators – encountered in reaching from the visible temporal to the invisible eternal world was that the former is con-

stituted of a mixture of good and evil that cannot in historical time be separated in any definitive fashion. Hence, fourth, I survey Beatus' attempts to anticipate the final separation of good and evil at the end of time that was a prerequisite for the revelation of the heavenly city. Here also, Beatus resorted to the number seven as a means to discern the reality that was to come. Finally, by reference to what Beatus describes as the "measure of faith", I show to what extent the picture of the heavenly city with which his commentary concludes can be viewed as a coherent and convincing anticipation of what inherently transcends the reach of language and visual imagery.

Two closely related codices, supplemented by others from the Beatus group, stand at the centre of the discussion. The first, now in the Morgan Library, was written and painted for the monastery of San Miguel de Escalada near León between 940 and 945. In the colophon Maius named himself as scribe and illuminator and invoked the archangel Michael, patron of the monastery for which he produced the codex, along with John the author of the Apocalypse: "Writing in awe of the most exalted patron ... for love of the book of the vision of John the beloved disciple, as part of its adornment I painted the marvellous words of the *storiae* as a sequence".⁴ The second codex according to its colophon was completed in 975, the scribe being "the priest Senior", and the illuminators "Ende the painter, maidservant of God" and "Emeterius monk and priest". This codex, which is now in the cathedral of Gerona, was produced in the monastery of San Salvador de Tábara near Zamora, where almost certainly the scribe and painter Maius had also been at home.⁵ This may help to account for the features that these two codices share. By the time they were written, Beatus' commentary had been augmented by additional materials. These included the text of Jerome's commentary on Daniel, which in our codices follows that of Beatus' Apocalypse commentary. Jerome himself had drawn attention to connections between Daniel and the Apocalypse, and so did Beatus. By way of signalling this connection, the illuminators placed an introductory Alpha at the opening of Beatus' Apocalypse, and a concluding

⁴ MS New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, M 644. The translated part of the colophon reads: *AD PABOREM(UE) PATRONI ARCISSIMI SCRIBE(N)S EGO ... AMORIS UI(US) LIBRI UISIONE IOHANNIDILECTIDISCIPULIINTEREIUSDECUSUERBAMIRIFICASTORIARUM(UE)DEPINXI PER SERIEM*. Williams (p. 21) translates: "I write this in awe of the exalted patron ... out of love for the book of the vision of John the beloved disciple. As part of its adornment I have painted a series of pictures for the wonderful words of its stories". I translate differently, since I think that Maius was referring to the sequence of Beatus' sixty-eight *storiae*, and not simply to 'stories' in the general sense.

⁵ For the scribe and painters, see WILLIAMS, *The Illustrated Beatus* 2, p. 51.

Omega at the end of Jerome's commentary on Daniel, and illustrated the latter in the same pictorial idiom as the text of Beatus.⁶

1. History, Patterned Meanings and Signs

Beatus lived in troubled times. Between 711 and ca. 715, within living memory if not of Beatus himself, then of his parents, the Muslims had conquered most of the peninsula, establishing a Caliphate with its capital at Cordoba in 755. Cordoba quickly became a prosperous and sophisticated metropolis, whereas the Asturian kingdom that was to provide Beatus' earliest known illustrators with more peaceful conditions and also with patronage, had barely come into existence.⁷ However, Beatus mentioned only in passing and indirectly the political disorders that were besetting Spain. Instead, what concerned him were division, heresy and schism within the church.

Shortly after completing his commentary on the Apocalypse, Beatus wrote a long letter addressed to Elipandus, archbishop of Toledo. Like other Spanish Christians, especially those of the Muslim South, Elipandus had espoused the idea – as Beatus perceived it – that Christ in his divinity was God's son by nature, and in his humanity only by adoption.⁸ Beatus viewed this distinction between the natural and the human Christ as a division in Christ's body the church, and interpreted the conflict between himself and Elipandus in the light of what he read in the Apocalypse and earlier commentaries on it. To comment

⁶ On links between Daniel and the Apocalypse, see Jerome, *Commentariorum in Daniele libri III <IV>*, ed. F. GLORIE (Turnhout 1964: CCSL 75A), I. 4. 1a; II. 7. 9a; II. 7. 10c; IV. 12. 4. For Beatus on this topic, see below at n. 25.

⁷ for an overview, A. RUCQUOI, *Histoire médiévale de la Péninsule ibérique* (Paris, 1993).

⁸ J.C. CAVADINI, *The Last Christology of the West: Adoptionism in Spain and Gaul, 785-820* (Philadelphia, 1993). According to Beatus, Elipandus thought that the adoption of the human Christ took place at his baptism (see Beatus Liebanensis et Eterius Oxomensis, *Adversus Elipandum libri duo*, ed. B. LÖFSTEDT (Turnhout 1984: CCCM 59), I. 12 (this same text, titled *Heterii et Sancti Beati ad Elipandum Epistola* is also reproduced in *Obras completas*, but with modernized spelling): "*Nec sane tunc unctus est Christus Spiritu sancto, quando super eum baptizatum ut columba descendit ... Sed ista mistica et invisibili unctione tunc intelligendus est unctus, quando Verbum Dei caro factum est ...*", and compare the baptism picture in the Gerona Beatus f. 189r, showing the dove in the customary fashion. J. WILLIAMS, "Purpose and imagery in the Apocalypse commentary of Beatus of Liébana", in: *The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages*, ed. R.K. EMMERSON and B. MCGINN (Ithaca, 1992), pp. 217-233 sees a stronger apocalyptic dimension in Beatus' text than is suggested here (see p. 225: "The commentary was very probably composed as a handbook to help prepare the Christian community for the anticipated end of the world"). Cf. below at n. 101.

on the Apocalypse was his way of coming to terms with his own society, and of locating the church in the turmoil around him. In addition, commenting on the Apocalypse was his way of vindicating the truth of Scripture. In the more than 200 folio pages of Beatus' commentary on the Apocalypse, accordingly, the name of Elipandus does not occur once, although Beatus' preoccupation with him was ever present.⁹ Rather, Beatus subsumed Elipandus and his followers among the false teachers and prophets who were being reprimanded in the text on which he was commenting.¹⁰ Troubles associated with Elipandus were intelligible because similar troubles had occurred before, and because Scripture itself spoke definitively about them.

Like some contemporaries, Beatus therefore expressed understanding of his time not directly through historical narrative but allusively, even poetically, by analogies with biblical texts. Viewing the events of his time essentially as recapitulations of earlier events, variations of an ageless scenario, he sought to render them intelligible by discovering patterns of repetition and their meaning as outlined in the Bible and in late antique commentaries on it. This view of history, requiring the observer to keep in touch with events, but more important with the ancient texts, repositories of wisdom, that facilitated the authentic interpretation of events, was fundamental to Beatus' exegesis.¹¹ It was part of a common discourse, embraced also by historical writers of his time. Two episodes from the Mozarabic chronicle that continued Isidore of Seville's history of Spain down to the year 754 can illustrate how texts and historical experience interacted.

The first episode tellingly involves a text, one of those authoritative works of biblical exegesis that were indispensable for a proper understanding not just of Scripture but also of contemporary events. For the year 642,¹² the chronicler

⁹ The letter to Elipandus by Beatus and Heterius consists of two books. The first is a refutation of Elipandus' teachings with extensive quotations from his works. The second, echoing two of Tyconius' rules (cf. below n. 23), is titled *De Christo et eius corpore, quod est ecclesia, et de diabolo et eius corpore quod est Antichristus* and duplicates even more than does book I materials of the Commentary on the Apocalypse, pointing to the shared apologetic purpose of the two works.

¹⁰ These include: Nicolaitans, Apc 2, 6; 2, 15; Jews, Apc 2, 9; the teachings of Baalam, Apc 2, 14; the prophetess Jezebel, Apc 2, 19; the synagogue of Satan, those who say they are Jews but are not, Apc 3, 9.

¹¹ *Beatus* 1, pp. 296-302, the plagues of Egypt are an image of current troubles; p. 309 the ten *tribulationes*. By these, Beatus meant persecutions of the church, compare Augustine *De Civitate Dei*, 18. 52-53, ed. B. DOMBART and A. KALB, 2 vols. (Turnhout, 1955: CCSL 47-48). According to Beatus the tribulations occupy *totum tempus huius saeculi*. He thus reinterpreted the ten persecutions of late antique millenarian thought in an Augustinian sense.

¹² *Continuatio hispana a. DCCLIV* ed. in: *Chronica minora saec. IV, V, VI, VII (II)*, ed. T.

recounted that a council of bishops assembled at Toledo sent Taio, bishop of Zaragoza, to Rome to bring back a copy of the parts of Pope Gregory the Great's *Moralia in Hiob* that were missing from Spanish libraries. The pope then ruling the see of Rome provided no assistance in finding the relevant volume in the papal library. In response to Taio's prayers, however, the apostles Peter and Paul, accompanied by Pope Gregory himself, located the book for him as a reward for the long and tiring journey,¹³ thereby enabling Spanish Christians to join Christians everywhere in reading the events of their times correctly.

The second episode from the chronicler of 754 refers to the Muslim conquest of Spain, precisely one of those events that clamoured for explanation. Having mentioned that the Muslims had captured Toledo, Zaragoza and Cordoba, the chronicler burst out:

But who is able to recount such great dangers? Who could tell of such grievous destruction? For even if all limbs were turned into tongues,¹⁴ human nature would be utterly incapable of listing all of Spain's misfortunes and so many evils of such magnitude. But so as to inform the reader of everything in one short page, and passing over the innumerable disasters of time¹⁵ from Adam to the present, which this cruel and impure world has brought upon countless regions and cities, whatever eventualities in history captured Troy has suffered, whatever Jerusalem endured that had been foreshadowed by prophetic utterance,¹⁶ and whatever Babylon endured through the utterance of scripture, and finally, whatever martyrdoms Rome newly adorned by the presence of the apostles has brought about, all these and as many sufferings Spain, once blessed and now made wretched, has endured both for her honour and for her shame.

MOMMSEN (Berlin, 1898: *MGH AA* 11), pp. 323-369 at pp. 341-345. The year given is *era* DCLXXX, which is 642 CE.

¹³ Once he had the book, Taio wanted to know (p. 345) whether Saint Augustine was among the crowd of saints that accompanied Peter, Paul and Gregory, but was told that Augustine resided in a higher place in heaven. The enquiry after Augustine highlights his importance in early medieval Spain. For Augustine's ideas in Beatus, mediated though they often were by Isidore of Seville, cf. below notes 22-23.

¹⁴ Perhaps there is a Vergilian echo here, compare *Aeneid* 6, 625-627.

¹⁵ The chronicler uses the Augustinian term *saeculum*, cf. MARKUS, *Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of Saint Augustine* (Cambridge: 1970). "Impure world" translates, although inadequately, the word play *mundus iste immundus*.

¹⁶ "*quidquid historialiter capta Troia pertulit, quidquid Iherosolima predicta per prophetarum eloquia baiulabit*". Note the contrast: events in Troy are the subject of history, those in Jerusalem of prophecy.

After this effusion, the chronicler continued listing catastrophes, while also pointing out that to recount all of them "would take too long", the issue being that, in the chronicler's view, the Muslim invasion of Spain was intelligible precisely because such things had happened before.¹⁷ It was the pattern that was meaningful, not the event in itself, and that pattern could only be discovered by knowing what the ancients had written.

In pursuit of this manner of interpreting the events of the day, Beatus interpreted the division of the Spanish church between the party of Elipandus and their opponents as a repetition of earlier events in sacred history. What the pattern in repetition meant only became discernible when one applied to it signs or indicators of meaning that were to be found in exegetical tradition. As the handing down of authentic interpretation from generation to generation, exegetical tradition expressed the consensus of the faithful and established in Scripture a common rule of life. For Beatus, the latest major link in the tradition was Pope Gregory whose exegesis of the Book of Job, the very work that bishop Taio had been sent to bring back to Spain he cited frequently.¹⁸ Beatus thus had little need for historical narratives, mere accounts of repetition in time. What was required instead was a method of applying to current events the signs, formulae of meaning, that were propounded in Scripture and exegesis. In the process of application, sign essentially superseded event, because once an event had been understood in relation to the appropriate sign, its significance was reduced to that of one example among many others that illustrated a larger reality.

If events when interpreted in the light of Scripture and exegesis formed patterns of meaning, so did time itself. The period in which Beatus perceived himself to be living was the sixth age, the time span of unknown duration that extended from the incarnation to the last judgement when the celestial Jeru-

¹⁷ Note, as a parallel phenomenon to the notorious brevity of early medieval chronicles the interest in lists of various kinds, e.g. in the *Chronicle of Albelda*, ed. in: Y. BONNAZ, *Chroniques asturiennes (fin IX^e siècle)* (Paris, 1987), pp. 10 ff. See H. WHITE, "The value of narrativity in the representation of reality", in ID., *The Content of the Form. Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore, 1987) pp. 1-25.

¹⁸ *Beatus* 1, p. 4, listing his authorities: Jerome, Augustine, Ambrose, Fulgentius, Gregory the Great, Tyconius, Irenaeus, Apringius and Isidore. The Gerona codex by way of giving visible expression to the chain of tradition that Beatus represented in his writing, shows, over the opening Alpha on f. 19r (matched by a concluding Omega, f. 284r) seven of these authors, adding John at the beginning: John, Jerome, Augustine, Ambrose, Fulgentius, Gregory the Great, Apringius and Isidore. Similarly the Turin Beatus (WILLIAMS, *The Illustrated Beatus*, 4, *The Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (London, 2002), No. 15), f. 22r. For a different presentation of the authors, see the Saint Sever Beatus (WILLIAMS, *The Illustrated Beatus*, 3, *The Tenth and Eleventh Centuries* (London, 1998), No. 13), f. 13v.

saalem of John's visions was to become manifest.¹⁹ Beatus deeply trusted the hidden meanings to be discovered in number codes, the manner in which numbers could be understood as signs that clarified not only the nature of events but also the nature of time. The world had been created in six days, each extending from morning to evening – as was written in Genesis, “of evening and morning the first day was made”, and similarly for the remaining days. Matching the six days of creation were the six ages of human history, each with its morning and evening, ending in the seventh eternal day of rest that would have no evening. By morning and evening Beatus meant that each age had a positive and a negative aspect. This idea is derived from Augustine who had listed the six ages of the world in conjunction with the six days of creation, each with its morning and evening. “Morning signifies the world’s prosperity”, Augustine wrote elsewhere, and “evening signifies the tribulation of the world”.²⁰ The first age, from Adam to Noah, as described by Beatus following Augustine had “in the morning the creation of man in paradise. In the evening it had the flood”.²¹ Subsequent ages likewise each had a morning of good and an evening of ill. “Already it is the sixth age”, Beatus wrote,

which runs at present from the coming of the Lord until the world ends and the judgement comes. For its morning it has Christ the true light who always rises in the hearts of believers, and who is called perpetual day. For its evening, it has the synagogue or the ignorance of fools, schismatics, hypocrites and heretics, and in the end it has perpetual night, Antichrist himself.²²

¹⁹ See *Beatus* 1, p. 609, where he follows earlier calculations about the end of time, i.e. of the sixth age, stating that it will end with the completion of the sixth millennium, *era* 838, but also quotes Mt 24, 36, “*non est vestrum scire tempora ...*”, adding “*In veritate, sexto millesimo anno finiendus erit mundus. Utrum impleantur an minuantur, soli Deo cognitum est*”. See also p. 614 and the *Chronicle of Albelda*, ed. BONNAZ, p. 13: the length of the sixth age is unknown.

²⁰ Augustine, *De Genesi contra Manichaeos*, 1. 23. 35–41, ed. D. WEBER (Vienna, 1998: CSEL 91); at 24. 42, Augustine integrates this scheme into the six ages in the lifespan of human beings, from infancy to old age. In *De civitate Dei* 16. 43 and 17. 1 Augustine summarizes this scheme. Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, Ps 64. 13, ed. E. DEKKERS and I. FRAIPONT (Turnhout, 1956: CCL 39): “*Mane significat prosperitatem saeculi; vespere significat tribulationem saeculi*”. This sermon develops the theme of the intermingling (64, 2 *permixtae sunt*) and ultimate separation of the two cities. Further, below n. 88.

²¹ *Beatus* 1, p. 617.

²² *Beatus* 1, pp. 624–5. Augustine is not cited among the sources for Beatus’ outline of the six ages in Romero-Pose’s edition, but the connection is clear, and the two share the same subdivision of the six ages, which are, from Adam to Noah, to Abraham, to David, to the Babylonian exile, to the Incarnation, followed by the present sixth age.

Each age as viewed by Beatus possessed its distinct characteristics. But the relation between Babylon and Jerusalem, the two cities whose contrasting characters and destinies are expounded in John's Apocalypse, while it characterized especially the fifth age, which extended from Israel's exile to the incarnation of Christ, also coloured human history in its entirety. The authors whom Beatus found to be especially relevant in this context were Augustine and Augustine's precursor Tyconius. From them he adopted the idea that in historical time good and evil were mingled, impossible to separate in any definitive way.²³ Augustine – and also Tyconius – had perceived this mingling as a historical process that did not permit one to distinguish in the here and now between those who would and those who would not be found in the City of God. Yet the heat of controversy with Elipandus drove Beatus to look for precisely such distinctions. In the here and now, he wished to be considered an exile from the diocese of Elipandus. Equally in the here and now, while recognizing that "pagans and bad Christians are mixed with the church", he also thought that "those who do evil, although alive in the flesh, are believed to be dead in their souls; not the fire that is to come, but the smoke of that fire is even now manifest in their works".²⁴

²³ P. FREDERIKSEN, "Tyconius and Augustine on the Apocalypse", in: *The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages*, pp. 20-37; on Beatus, Tyconius and Augustine see CAVADINI, *The Last Christology of the West*, pp. 52-56. Beatus accepted Tyconius' *Book of Rules* and quoted it often, but with Augustinian modifications. See Tyconius, *The Book of Rules*, Second rule, ed. and tr. W.S. BABCOCK (Atlanta, Ga., 1989), p. 14 (the Latin text is that of J. ARMITAGE ROBINSON, *The Rules of Tyconius: The Fourth Book of Ezra: Euthaliana* (Cambridge, 1895: *Texts and Studies* 3), p. 8), "*de Domini corpore bipertito*", having mentioned the *templum bipertitum* at the conclusion of Rule 1. In Rule 5, Tyconius wrote about bipartition in more detail (ed. and tr. BABCOCK p. 102; ed. ARMITAGE ROBINSON p. 63): "*Hierusalem bipertita est, et portae eius bipertitae. Per portas inferorum exitur de Hierusalem sancta, et per easdem intratur in maledicta. Qui autem per portas intrant caeli intrant in aeternam Hierusalem ... Sanctae portae civitatis Hierusalem Christus est, et vicarii eius custodes legis, interficientes vero prophetas et lapidantes missos ad se. Porta diabolus est et vicarii eius pseudoapostoli praedicatores legis, claves regni caelorum alto sensu abscondentes. Ipso sunt portae quae non vincunt Ecclesiam ...*". Augustine corrected the passage in Rule 2 in his *De Doctrina Christiana* 3. 32. 45, ed. I. MARTIN (Turnhout, 1996: CCL 32): "*Secunda (sc. regula) est de domini corpore bipertito, quod quidem non ita debuit appellare; non enim re vera domini corpus est, quod cum illo non erit in aeternum, sed dicendum fuit: de domini corpore vero atque permixto, aut vero atque simulato vel quid aliud, quia non solum in aeternum, verum etiam nunc hypocritae non cum illo esse dicendi sunt, quamvis in eius esse videantur ecclesia. Unde poterat ista regula et sic appellari, ut diceretur de permixta ecclesia*". The many aspects of this mingling interested Beatus throughout his commentary and in his many quotations of Tyconius, but he did not use the term *bipertitum* or its cognates.

²⁴ Beatus Liebanensis et Eterius Oxomensis, *Adversus Elipandum libri duo*, ed. LÖFSTEDT, 1. 38: "*Protulimus fidem nostram eglesiae nostrae. Proferat nunc domnus Elipandus fidem suam*

The multifarious activities of "those who do evil" were writ large in the history of nations and empires. In an excursus that he inserted into his Apocalypse commentary, Beatus turned to the prophet Daniel's vision of the statue with a golden head, breast of silver, torso of bronze, legs of iron, and feet of iron mixed with clay, where the succession of metals betokened a succession of empires.²⁵ The problem that had most interested late antique exegetes was the identity of the empire represented by the legs and feet. Like others before him, Beatus identified this empire as Rome: the iron legs and the feet of iron and clay indicated to him both that the Roman empire was the most terrible of the four empires that were exemplified in the statue, and that it would terminate with the reign of Antichrist, who would in due course be defeated by Christ.²⁶

eglesiae suae in qua fide nos redarguit, ut aut ita credamus, aut, si noluerimus, a dioecese sua exules habeamur" (The Madrid edition has for this last phrase: "*ut auditu credamus, at, si noluerimus, a docesi sua exules habeamur*"). *Beatus* 1, p. 56: "*pagani et christiani mali mixti sunt cum ecclesia*"; *Beatus* 2, pp. 310-311: "*Cum mala faciunt, quamvis carne vivant, in anima mortui esse creduntur: et non adhuc ignis futurus, sed fumus ipsius ignis in opere ostenditur*".

²⁵ MS Morgan M 644 f. 40v, illustrating Beatus' reference to Dn 2, 31-34. The relevance of Daniel to Beatus' commentary on the *Apocalypse* is reflected in the manuscripts, see above at n. 6. The picture of the statue and the stone that fell on and destroyed it accompanies Beatus' discussion of the four empires, which, according to Beatus were Babylon, Persia, Macedonia and Rome, see *Beatus* 1, pp. 221 ff. The same statue, with the stone that destroyed it is also depicted for the relevant passage in Jerome's commentary on Daniel. See e.g., MS Morgan M 644 f. 40r with f. 243v; the Valladolid Beatus (WILLIAMS, *The Illustrated Beatus* 2, No. 4) f. 42v with f. 195v; MS Gerona f. 61 with f. 244r.

²⁶ *Beatus* 1, pp. 221 f. (on *Daniel* 7,5-7); see also *Beatus* 2, p. 102 (on *Apc* 12, 3, the beast pursuing the woman clothed in the sun and standing on the moon: this beast also is Rome); further, pp. 122 ff.; 159 ff.; and especially pp. 278-285. Although Beatus composed a work of exegesis, not of history, his perception that the Roman empire was still in existence was shared with the Mozarabic chronicler of 754. Like Isidore of Seville, whose work he continued, the chronicler of 754 noted the succession of emperors of Constantinople and included in his text comments about salient events in the Eastern Mediterranean. In his eyes the Eastern Roman empire was coextensive with the Roman empire of a bygone age and hence continued to provide a historiographical frame of reference even though events in Constantinople were peripheral to the chronicler's main theme, which focused on conflict among Christians, and between heretics and Christians in Spain. Indeed, like Isidore and several other Spanish historians, and also Beatus, the chronicler of 754 numbered years by the Roman era which began with the emperor Augustus. Regarding Antichrist as the successor of, but not identical with Rome, see *Beatus* 2, p. 176, the section heading running: "*De Antichristo qualiter imperatorem tollat Romanum et ipse sumat imperium*". The section consists of a discussion of Augustine, *De civitate Dei* 20. 19. 1-3, loosely quoted. Regarding the statue, A. MOMIGLIANO, "The origins of universal history", in: ID., *Settimo contributo alla storia degli studi classici e del mondo antico* (Rome, 1984) pp. 77-103 (also in his *On Pagans, Jews, and Christians* (Middletown, 1987) pp. 31-57); A. MOMIGLIANO, "Daniele e la teoria greca della successione degli imperi", in: ID., *Settimo contributo*, pp. 297-304.

Interpreted in this way, Daniel's vision was confirmed by that of John. Supported by his confidence in the signifying potential of numbers, Beatus perceived Rome to be represented, no longer by Daniel's statue but by the seven-headed beast that in the Apocalypse ascended from the deep after the blowing of the seventh trumpet.²⁷ The seven heads stood for Rome's seven hills, or for the seven Roman emperors who in Beatus' reckoning had ruled and died by the time that John was living on Patmos. Among these emperors Nero, under whom the first Roman martyrs Peter and Paul had suffered, specifically foreshadowed Antichrist. Moreover, a direct institutional continuity led from Julius Caesar, who, as Beatus anachronistically saw it, had been crowned with a diadem, to the emperors of his own day whose reigns were inaugurated by the same ritual of coronation with a diadem that Beatus ascribed to Caesar.²⁸ Another image for Rome with her seven hills and seven emperors was the seven-headed monster who in the Apocalypse pursued the woman representing the church whom John described as being clothed in the sun and standing on the moon.²⁹ In applying these apocalyptic images to the Roman empire, Beatus echoed an early Christian and late antique exegetical tradition that he found in his sources. But he lacked the sense of urgency and desperation that had moved his predecessors to identify the powers that be with a force of evil incarnate in Rome. Instead, to view Rome as Daniel's fourth empire or as one of the seven-headed monsters of the Apocalypse³⁰ was a method of locating oneself in time and of characterizing the evening of the sixth and last age of human history.

²⁷ MS Morgan M 644 f. 190r.

²⁸ Rome as the seven-headed beast of Apc 13,1, *Beatus* 2, pp. 122-123. On MS Morgan M 644 f. 190r, illustrating the fifth vial poured on the *sedes bestiae* in Apc 16,10, see *Beatus* 2, pp. 243-244. The seven heads of the beast as seven hills and as emperors of Rome, *Beatus* 2, p. 159. On the rare occasions when Beatus used political imagery in his commentary, he spontaneously turned to the emperors, and secondarily to the Asturian kings of his homeland; see *Beatus* 1 pp. 632-633: "*Imperatoris ordinatione subsistentes duo dignitates, id est praefectorum et mulionum, uno regi militant ...*", where perhaps one should understand the term *regi* as referring to the Byzantine *basileus*, not to Silo king of Asturias, or his successor Mauregatus.

²⁹ For the images, see e.g. MS Morgan M 644 ff. 152-153; MS Morgan M 429, f. 101-102. Like the Roman emperors from Caesar onwards, so the seven heads of this monster were crowned with diadems, see Apc 12, 3, "*in capitibus suis septem diademata*", with *Beatus* 2, pp. 102 f., commenting on the four empires, with Rome as the last.

³⁰ MS Morgan M 644 f. 190r, the fifth vial over the "*sedes bestiae*", illustrating Apc 16,10 ff, and *Beatus* 2, pp. 243-244, where he wrote about the "*thronus bestiae*". The illustrator here elaborates on the text of the Apocalypse so as to bring his picture closer to Beatus' overall interpretation. The text mentions merely the "*sedes bestiae*", saying nothing about what kind of monster the reader is to think of. But from Beatus' explanation, the illustrator supplied the seven heads.

Rome, where bishop Taio of Zaragoza had been sent to find a copy of Gregory's *Moralia* was far away, and even further was Constantinople, the capital of the Roman empire of Beatus' day. Much closer to home was another of the late antique legacies that lives on in the text of Beatus, and that is the imagery of the city and of what cities stood for. When the chronicler of 754 thought of the Muslim incursions, it was the fate of "ancient and flourishing cities", of "elegant cities", and of Toledo the "royal city", that moved him most.³¹ Furthermore, the idea of the city as the fundamental unit of social order pervades the Apocalypse³² and was taken up by Beatus and his illustrators, who devised images of cities that were derived from antecedents in late antique imperial and Christian iconography even where no city was mentioned by John.³³

2. The Number Seven

The first major theme of the Apocalypse is the messages that John was instructed to convey to the angels of the seven churches of Asia. The messages, dealing with false prophets, teachers of erroneous doctrines and negligent Christians in general gave Beatus the opportunity to point to these very same troubles in the church of his own day.³⁴ We thus see, in the codices from Tábara

³¹ *Chronicle of 754*, ed. MOMMSEN, p. 353, l. 15: "*Caesaraugustam antiquissimam et florentissimam civitatem*"; l. 16: "*civitates decore*"; ll. 10-11: "*Toledo urbem regiam*". As the former Visigothic capital, Toledo is graced with the term *urbs*, normally reserved for Rome.

³² The idea of the city inspired not only the illustrators of Beatus' commentary but other early medieval illustrators of the Apocalypse, who devised urban images that were derived from late antique imperial and Christian iconography. The continuity is particularly striking in the Trier Apocalypse (see P.K. KLEIN, *Die Trierer Apokalypse: Vollständige Faksimile-Ausgabe im Originalformat des Kodex 31 der Stadtbibliothek Trier*, 2, *Der Kodex und sein Bildschmuck* (Graz, 1979)). Images of late antique origin depicted the seven churches (see MS Trier f. 2v), Babylon the Great and those unnamed cities that John had described as targets of God's wrath (MS Trier f. 52r, seventh vial; MS Trier f. 56r, Babylon); the same images were also used to refer to the celestial Jerusalem. (MS Trier f. 70r). See also E. HARNISCHFEGGER, *Die Bamberger Apokalypse* (Stuttgart 1981), ff. 4v, 6v, 8r, 9r showing the seven churches in shorthand images of walls, gates and cityscape; see also Babylon, f. 45r; Celestial Jerusalem f. 55r. But these urban images lack the theological dimension that is so salient in the city imagery of Beatus. Cf. below n. 37

³³ see the exhibition catalogue by M.L. GATTI PERER, *La dimora di Dio con gli huomini* (Ap. 21, 3): *Immagini della Gerusalemme celeste dal III al XIV secolo* (Milan, 1983: *Vita e Pensiero. Pubblicazioni della Università Cattolica*).

³⁴ See especially Beatus 1, p. 291, dealing with those who deny that Jesus is Christ, by which he means Elipandus and his followers. Also, pp. 296-302; 304; 309, the ten days of tribulation of Apc 2, 10 are tribulations of "*totum tempus istius saeculi*"; p. 313, on Pergamum

and San Miguel de Escalada, as in all the other illustrated *Beatus* manuscripts, how John delivers his message in the form of a book or writing tablet or a miniature building to each of the angels of the seven churches.³⁵ The angel stands next to an architectural structure that represents his church (Fig. 1; cf. Fig. 2).

Preoccupied as he was with schism and division in the church of his own day, *Beatus* asked himself repeatedly in his commentaries why, given that the church as the body of Christ was one, seven separate messages had been sent to individual churches, and he expounded meanings of the number seven as diverse expressions of unity in multiplicity. For example, the gifts of the one Holy Spirit were seven in number. Also, the church as the body of Christ possessed seven members: head, hands and feet, and the senses of sight, hearing, taste and smell. In a different framework of signs, the church had been foreshadowed in the Old Testament by Noah's Ark that had been threatened by the flood just as the church was threatened throughout the sixth age by the world.³⁶ In the Ark, at the same time, seven persons had been saved,³⁷ and Noah as the eighth person stood for Christ. Accordingly, John addressed the seven churches of Asia, and Asia in turn signified the "celestial homeland" of all Christians.³⁸

the "seat of Satan", "*omni ecclesiae dicit, quia ubique satanas habitat*"; p. 337, negligent bishops; p. 364 negligent monks.

³⁵ MS Morgan M 644 f. 48r, Ephesus, writing tablet; f. 52v, Smyrna, building; f. 57v, Pergamum, open book (or perhaps open diptych for writing?); f. 62r, Thyatira, writing tablet; f. 66r, Sardis, building; f. 70v, Philadelphia, open book or diptych; f. 77r, Laodicea, open book or diptych. I do not understand the significance of the building.

³⁶ Such a comparison of Ark and church is suggested when we juxtapose MS Gerona ff. 102v-103r, the Ark on water with floating corpses, with two other images of separation: MS Gerona ff. 171v-172r (Apc 12) showing the *puer* born from the woman clothed in the sun and standing on the moon being snatched into heaven with the caption "*ubi puer raptus est*", while the wicked angels are swimming naked in the deep; MS Gerona f. 192r (Apc 14, 6-13), where those adoring the beast, ejected from heaven, lie naked in the deep.

³⁷ MS Gerona f. 102r; MS Morgan M 644 f. 79r.

³⁸ *Beatus* 1, p. 255: just as the Ark was in danger from water, so the church is in danger of the world. Church and Ark, *Beatus* 1, p. 433; p. 108. See also *Beatus* 1, pp. 196-197, the seven gifts of the spirit; the number seven signifies all the world *Beatus* 1, pp. 76 f.; Asia as celestial homeland, *Beatus* 1, p. 78. On Ephesus as the entire church, *Beatus* 1, p. 262; Smyrna likewise, *Beatus* 1, p. 285; also Pergamum, *Beatus* 1, p. 311, where he points out that the devil who dwells in Pergamum is everywhere; cf. *Beatus* 1, p. 337. *Beatus* 1, pp. 421-435 has the section titled, *INTERPRETATIO QUALITER UNA ECCLESIA SIT CUM SEPTEM DICANTUR APERTISSIME PER ARCAM NOE DECLARATUR*. In the Morgan *Beatus*, Maius illustrated this section with a picture of the ark displaying the animals and the seven saved persons with Noah, who welcomes the dove bringing the olive branch (Gn 8, 11). See also the Valladolid *Beatus*, f. 73v; MS Gerona ff. 102v-103r, for further images of the ark illustrating this same passage, and similarly in other *Beatus* codices. These images, which make sense only in light of *Beatus*' commentary, demonstrate just how

Each church was thus to be conceptualized as participating in the one celestial homeland.

The number seven is ubiquitous in the Apocalypse. The messages to the seven churches are followed by the opening of the book with seven seals. Next come seven angels who each blow a trumpet of divine wrath and are followed by the pouring out of afflictions contained in seven vials. There are also the seven spirits of God,³⁹ the seven candelabra before the throne of God and the seven stars in the hand of the Son of Man.⁴⁰ For Beatus, all these sevens provided a way of formulating his ideal of unity and unanimity in multiplicity within the church:⁴¹ many churches propagated one teaching, many bishops and priests with their flocks constituted one body of Christ. Beatus' concern with unity was not lost on some of his illustrators, who created an original image that reiterated his point exactly. This is the picture showing how at the beginning of his visions, John knelt before the throne of the Son of Man with the seven stars and the seven candelabra, which as Beatus had explained, stood for the seven churches, and how John then heard the voice of the Son of Man commanding him to speak to these churches. In the codex from Escalada, Maius represented the seven churches as two tiers of arches surmounting each other so as to convey the impression of a coordinated whole (Fig. 4).⁴² Ende and Emeterius, the illustrators of the codex from Tábara heightened this point by depicting the two tiers of arches being encompassed within one single arch representing the universal church (Fig. 5).⁴³ Also, where other illustrators showed the seven candelabra in a row under or next to the throne,⁴⁴ Ende and Emeterius

closely the illuminators read the text they were working on (cf. below at nn. 85 ff. and n. 118).

³⁹ Apc 4, 5.

⁴⁰ MS Morgan M 644 f. 27r.

⁴¹ Note *Beatus* 1, pp. 614-5 on literal and transferred meanings and numbers. See further, on Beatus' interest in the figurative meanings of numbers, the pioneering essay by L.G. FREEMAN, "Elementos simbólicos en la obra de Beato", in: *Obras completas de Beato de Liébana*, pp. XXXIII-LVI.

⁴² MS Madrid, Real Academia de la Historia, Cod. 33 (WILLIAMS, *The Illustrated Beatus* 3, No. 9) f. 20v; MS Morgan M 644 f. 27r; Turin Beatus, f. 34r; contrast Trier (above n. 27) f. 2v, where the seven churches appear as seven separate clusters of buildings, and the Bamberg Apocalypse (above n. 32), where the seven churches are simply paired, making a sequence matching that of the text, Ephesus with Smyrna; Pergamum with Thyatira; Sardis with Philadelphia, leaving the last church, Laodicea to be depicted on its own. See also S. DE SILVA Y VERÁSTEGUI, "El Beato Emiliano de la Academia de la Historia", in: M. EGUIZABEL RAMÍREZ, S. DE SILVA Y VERÁSTEGUI and J.B. OLARTE, *El Beato de Sa Millán de la Cogolla* (Madrid, 1999), pp. 11-112, at pp. 34-36, commenting on the interconnectedness of Beatus' text with the imagery of the seven churches on f. 20v.

⁴³ MS Gerona f. 36v.

⁴⁴ e.g. the Trier Apocalypse (above, n. 32), f. 15v.

intertwined them underneath another arch, so as to emphasize the importance of unity in diversity yet further.⁴⁵

Number codes as used in the Apocalypse are ambiguous. For the number seven identified not only the church, but also Antichrist who was to overthrow Rome and rule at the end of the sixth age. Simultaneously, it identified his many forerunners, in whom Beatus saw the false prophets and teachers in the church of his own time. An example was the seven-headed monster who in the Apocalypse ascended from the sea demanding to be worshipped by the earth's inhabitants:⁴⁶ this creature stood both for Rome and for Antichrist who was to conquer seven kings before reaching the height of his own power.⁴⁷ In addition, the number of the monster's name, given in the text of the Apocalypse as 666, could, according to Beatus, be expanded into the seven names of Antichrist, all of which his illustrators presented to the reader in tabular form.⁴⁸ Their intention was to equip Antichrist and his numerous forerunners, false teachers, lazy priests, neglectful monks and misguided lay people⁴⁹ with a visible, recognizable profile. However, divergent meanings could be attached to the same number seven, and in addition, Antichrist, like his precursors, imitated Christ, using his very precepts and his name to deceive the unwary. Beatus thus ask himself wearily, "If the church is one, why do we quarrel among each other? Why do they call us Antichrist, and we them?"⁵⁰ No sooner was this question asked, however, than Beatus launched into a detailed discussion as to how it might be possible to recognize Antichrist within the church of his day after all.

The Apocalypse, along with Beatus' commentary and its illustrations, enshrines, essentially, a double movement. On the one hand, afflictions of the earth accompanied by ever more powerful manifestations of evil accumulate one upon another. They reach culminating points when the seven headed mon-

⁴⁵ MS Gerona f. 37r.

⁴⁶ Apc 13, 1; cf. 16, 10, the fifth vial poured out over the "*sedes bestiae*", this being the episode depicted in MS Morgan M 644 f. 190r.

⁴⁷ MS Morgan M 644 f. 151r, top: siege of Jerusalem by seven kings, with seven faithful inside; bottom, killing of the two witnesses.

⁴⁸ *Beatus* 2, pp. 135-180; the seven names, *Beatus* 2, pp. 166-167 (for the tables of the names of Antichrist, not reproduced in this edition at p. 168, see MS Gerona f. 185v, f. 186r). See Apc 13, 18 for the number 666. Note also MS Biblioteca Nacional Madrid, Vitr. 14-1 (WILLIAMS, *The Illustrated Beatus* 2, No. 3) ff. 121v-122r. *Beatus* 2, pp. 161-163 on the characters ACXYME, regarding Antichrist's usurpation of the Chi Rho monogram. See also MS Lisbon, Arq. Nacional, Torre do Tombo Cod. 160, (WILLIAMS, *The Illustrated Beatus*, 5, *The Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries* (London, 2003), No. 22) f. 167r.

⁴⁹ Lazy priests, *Beatus* 1, p. 356; priests who preach, but do not act, *Beatus* 1, p. 342; *Beatus* 1, pp. 210-210 ff. on heresies.

⁵⁰ *Beatus* 1, p. 290.

ster seeks to devour the woman clothed in the sun and standing on the moon who represents the church,⁵¹ and when finally the great city of Babylon becomes manifest and is destroyed.⁵² On the other hand, God's power is revealed concurrently: his altar is revealed in heaven, the temple is opened, all human-kind is judged, and finally the holy city comes down from heaven. As perceived by Beatus, however, the two components of this double movement, each sustained by its own series of sevens, were not in the last resort clearly separable. For the signs that defined each movement were themselves a product of the coexistence of good and evil in society at large, and of the mingled, unseparated condition of the church during the sixth age. In short, signs could not be other than ambiguous, and the church, while yearning "for celestial things, contemplates in obscurity him whom she desires later to see face to face". Beatus expressed this desire ever more pressingly in the course of writing his commentary and as we shall see, explored the code of seven to organize his thoughts not merely about historical time, but also to reach an understanding of history's ultimate outcome, the revelation of the heavenly city.⁵³

3. Cities

Beatus' illuminators followed his lead. They all depicted the seven churches to whom John delivered his messages, whether as buildings (e.g. Fig. 1) or simply as arches, gateways or portals.⁵⁴ In the codex that Ende and Emeterius painted at Tábara in 975, the portals representing the seven churches are elaborate arched structures revealing between curtains drawn aside one or more altars (Fig. 2).⁵⁵ The chalices standing on these altars and the votive

⁵¹ Apc 12, 1 ff.; MS Morgan M 644 ff. 152v-153r.

⁵² Apc 17, 14-18; MS Morgan M 644, f. 202v.

⁵³ See *Beatus* 1, p. 290 the holy Jerusalem and the Jerusalem that kills prophets, with p. 42, "*Sicut civitas dei ecclesia est, ita e contrario civitas diaboli Iherusalem est quae occidit prophetas, illa Iherusalem caelestis Dei est ubi nostra conversatio est. Illa libera est quae est mater omnium nostrorum: ista servit cum filiis. Nostra vero ecclesia in hoc mundo non dicitur Iherusalem, id est visio pacis, quia in pugna est: sed ecclesia nostra Sion dicitur, id est speculatio contemplationis quia terrena calcat et medullitus ad caelestia anhelat et per aenigmata contemplatur quem post faciem ad faciem videre desiderat*" (cf. 1 Cor 13, 12, "*videmus nunc per speculum in aenigmate, tunc autem faciem ad faciem*"). The inspiration is Augustinian, cf. below n. 88. Further, *Beatus* 2, pp. 296; 337; 387, etc. For more on the code of seven, see below at nn. 105 ff.

⁵⁴ E.g. MS Biblioteca Nacional Madrid, Vitr. 14-1, f. 43r, Philadelphia.

⁵⁵ MS Gerona f. 71r, Ephesus with chalice on altar; f. 76r, Smyrna with three altars; f. 85r, Thyatira, altar with chalice and another with curtains; f. 89v, Sardis with altars, one with a

crowns hanging over them point to the presence of Christ. Taken together, these visual tokens along with the text they refer to were anchored in their time and place and demonstrated how human beings living in this sixth age can capture some glimpse of the as yet invisible celestial Jerusalem, the city built in heaven that John saw descending from above at the end of the Apocalypse (cf. Fig. 18).⁵⁶ Thanks to the mingling of the two cities, however, the glimpse could only be caught from a distance and from within the terrestrial city, dominated as it was by the doings of infidels, pagans and false Christians.

In accord with this inescapable reality, the buildings, portals and arches that represent the seven churches of Asia reflect the architecture of the time and of the not so distant past. Structures similar to those depicting the seven churches appear in Roman public art and in its late antique Christian descendants as an iconographic shorthand to represent cities.⁵⁷ The horseshoe arches that were favoured by the artists who illustrated the early Beatus codices evoke Visigothic and Islamic buildings, while the altars revealed between curtains in the Tábara codex of 975 and elsewhere⁵⁸ derive from late antique portrayals of saints standing between curtains in the doors of their churches, their protecting presences shining forth over the faithful.⁵⁹

To draw attention to such protectors, the Visigothic king Wamba had installed over the gates of Toledo inscriptions invoking the martyrs whose relics rested in the city's churches:

May you, holy lords, whose presence radiates here
save this city and people by your accustomed favour.⁶⁰

In the tenth century, Maius who painted the codex from San Miguel de Escalada, and Ende and Emeterius who painted the Tábara codex of 975 thought of the city of Babylon in just this way. The city gate of Babylon is the opening

chalice; ff. 94r, 100r, Philadelphia and Laodicea with altars and chalice, the latter also with votive crown over altar. Regarding the tripartite structure of the church according to Beatus and in the codex from San Miguel de Escalada, see below at nn. 87-90.

⁵⁶ Apc 21, 2 "*et civitatem sanctam Hierusalem novam vidi descendentem de caelo a Deo ...*"; MS Morgan M 644, f. 222v.

⁵⁷ cf. G. BANDMANN, *Mittelalterliche Architektur als Bedeutungsträger* (Darmstadt, 1985); on city gates see pp. 90 ff.

⁵⁸ E.g. the Valladolid Beatus, ff. 48r, 52r, 56r, etc.; similarly the Facundus Beatus (WILLIAMS, *The Illustrated Beatus* 3, No. 11), ff. 78r, 82v, 87v, etc.

⁵⁹ E.g. Peter and Paul in a doorway, see W.F. VOLBACH, *Elfenbeinarbeiten der Spätantike und des frühen Mittelalters*, 3rd edn. (Mainz, 1976), Nos. 53-154; cf. S. MACCORMACK, "Loca sancta", in: *Roman Religion*, ed. C. ANDO (Edinburgh, 2003), pp. 252-272, at pp. 257-264.

⁶⁰ *Continuatio hispana*, ed. MOMMSEN, p. 348, era 712.

image for Jerome's commentary on Daniel that follows Beatus' Apocalypse commentary in all our manuscripts.

In the Escalada codex the sarcophagi containing the bodies of Ananias, Azarias and Misael, the three young men in the fiery furnace, each sarcophagus marked with the occupant's name, are displayed above this city's gateway, while in the Tábara codex, it is the Ark of the Covenant that is displayed above the gate, with a caption explaining that the Ark had been deported to Babylon when Jerusalem fell to Nebuchadnezzar (Fig. 3).⁶¹ Either way, the city was protected by a sacred presence, and similarly Christ, in the images of the seven churches painted by Ende and Emeterius, was sacramentally present in and protected his church.

The structures that represent the seven churches constitute a fundamental unit in the visual vocabulary of Beatus' illustrators, a unit that at the conclusion of the commentary was elaborated into the composite image of the city built in heaven (Fig. 18).⁶² Before reaching this point, however, the artists illustrated several *storiae* involving cities that enhanced and complicated the meaning of this concluding image.

Take the *storia* "of Elijah or of the law and the gospel".⁶³ After the "mighty angel" had given John the little book to eat,⁶⁴ power was given by God to two holy witnesses to prophesy, to prevent rain from falling and to strike the earth with plague. Although the beast from the abyss was to kill the witnesses, they

⁶¹ MS Morgan M 644 f. 238v, the sarcophagi of the three young men. The Saint Sever Beatus, f. 217r shows the city gate with what seems to be the three sarcophagi but without naming the bodies contained in them. The Osma Beatus (WILLIAMS, *The Illustrated Beatus* 4, No. 14) f. 147r pointedly shows the city gate of Babylon in the process of collapsing, with the exception of three arches framing the names of the three young men, that are still standing. MS Gerona ff. 236v-237r shows the ark of the Covenant in Babylon's city gate. The city gate of Babylon is placed at the opening of Jerome's commentary on Daniel that follows the text of Beatus. The illustrators of the later Beatus codices lost interest in this issue and depicted the city gate of Babylon without either the sarcophagi or the Ark of the Covenant. The image of a protecting presence over a city gate goes back to a passage in Herodotus, see J. DILLERY, "Darius and the tomb of Nitocris (Hdt. 1,187)", *Classical Philology* 87 (1992), pp. 30-38. On the names of the three young men see Dn 1, 6-7; 3, 12. Jerome commented only on the first of these passages, according to which Ananias, Misael and Azarias were given Babylonian names to replace these their Jewish ones. According to Jerome, they received Babylonian names *in terra captivitatis*, see Jerome, *Commentariorum in Daniele libri III <IV>*, ed. F. GLORIE, on Dn 1, 7. According to the painters of these images, therefore, the three young men were after their deaths protecting the city of Babylon in their Jewish not their Babylonian capacity. Further on the code of seven, see below at nn. 105 ff.

⁶² MS Morgan M 644 f. 222v, and further below at notes 114-124.

⁶³ *Beatus* 2, p. 66.

⁶⁴ Apc 10, 1-11; *Beatus* 2, pp. 52-65.

were later to ascend to heaven and a tenth part of the city was to collapse in an earthquake.⁶⁵ Beatus identified the two witnesses as the prophets Elijah and Jeremiah, representing the Old and New Testaments or the Law and the Gospel, and in more general terms the church, while the beast was Antichrist, who was to rise from among the people of the Roman empire, the empire, that is, of Beatus' own day.⁶⁶ The power of the witnesses to close the heavens so that no rain could fall paralleled the power of the church when withholding its wisdom from men of ill will, while the death of the witnesses represented the daily struggles of the faithful.⁶⁷ The picture accompanying this text in the Escalada codex, and similarly in the Tábara codex expanded Beatus' point by showing the death of the two witnesses in juxtaposition with the siege of Jerusalem by Antichrist and his followers – where Jerusalem is depicted by means of the customary city gate (Fig. 6).⁶⁸

This pictorial amplification of John's text and Beatus' commentary should be considered alongside a further image, where the witnesses ascend to heaven (Fig. 7).⁶⁹ They rise up on a cloud, watched, as the legend of the picture informs the viewer, by their enemies, while below, the city is represented by arches that according to another legend are collapsing in an earthquake and are burying the despairing inhabitants in debris. The illustrators of Beatus' text thus juxtaposed the death of the witnesses and the siege of the holy city of Jerusalem, while in a contrary evolution the resurrection of the witnesses brings with it the affliction of the city of the wicked. In this way, the destinies of the two cities were dovetailed one into the other and were played out, as Beatus insisted, in the present.

⁶⁵ Apc 11, 3-13.

⁶⁶ Elijah and Jeremiah, *Beatus* 2, pp. 72-73; cf. pp. 78-79, "*duo prophetae duo sunt testamenta*". But note, in the matching picture, MS Morgan 644 f. 151r and MS Gerona f. 166r, the witnesses are identified as Elijah and Enoch. On the Roman empire, *Beatus* 2, pp. 94-95.

⁶⁷ *Beatus* 2, p. 71. Note also, *Beatus* 2 pp. 68-9, "*Et qui nunc spiritaliter ecclesiam laedit iam tunc aperte devastabit et Eliam et qui cum eo venturus est perspicue occidet, quod nunc duos testes spiritaliter occidit*".

⁶⁸ MS Morgan M 644 f. 151r; MS Gerona f. 166r, expand on Beatus' exegesis of the seven churches as one church in depicting seven figures inside Jerusalem, along with seven matching representatives of Antichrist outside it. See further *Beatus* 1, p. 290: "The Lord, leaving an example for his body (the church), (while himself living) in the midst of the synagogue of holy Israel, in the midst of Jerusalem, endured Jerusalem who kills the prophets". Cf. KLEIN, *Der ältere Beatus Kodex*, pp. 102-107, who finds this juxtaposition of the death of the witnesses with the siege of Jerusalem hard to explain.

⁶⁹ MS Gerona f. 167v; MS Morgan M 644 f. 154v; *Beatus* 2, p. 81 interprets this episode as the bodily resurrection of the two witnesses at the second coming. MS Morgan M 429 f. 99r depicts the same scene.

When the seventh trumpet sounded, God's temple in heaven was thrown open and the Ark of the covenant was revealed amidst lightning, voices and thunder.⁷⁰ The moment was captured by Ende and Emeterius in a picture displaying the Ark under an elaborate trefoil arch.⁷¹ Maius in the Escalada codex, along with other illuminators interpreted the episode in the spirit of Beatus who conjoined the revelation of the ark of the covenant with the appearance of Antichrist in the guise of the beast from the abyss who had killed the two witnesses.⁷² These painters therefore added, beneath the open archway of the temple revealing the ark, a prancing beast with the explanation "where the beast ascends from the abyss" (Fig. 8).⁷³ Its presence highlights the as yet mingled, unseparated condition of the city of God, while the flashes of lightning emanating from the temple in the Escalada codex represent, as Beatus was fond of repeating,⁷⁴ the preaching and travails of the church.

After further displays of the might of the beast, John saw in mid heaven an angel carrying the eternal gospel that he would "proclaim to those who dwell on earth", while a second angel announced the fall of Babylon the great, and a third promised torment to the worshippers of the beast. Next, John saw the harvesting of the earth, and how blood as high as a horse's bridle flowed from the winepress "outside the city".⁷⁵ Heaven, for Beatus, was the church, the eternal gospel was the church's preaching, and Babylon was the city of the devil or this present world.⁷⁶ In the codex from San Miguel de Escalada⁷⁷ Maius juxtaposed

⁷⁰ Apc 11, 19 with *Beatus* 2, pp. 93-96.

⁷¹ MS Gerona f. 170r.

⁷² see *Beatus* 2, p. 92 where the texts to be discussed in the *storia* are cited. They are Apc 11, 19 about the opening of the temple, and Apc 11, 7 about the beast from the abyss. For discussion of the beast as Antichrist, who is to rise from among the people of the Roman empire, see *Beatus* 2, pp. 94-95.

⁷³ "*ubi bestia ascendet de abisso*", MS Morgan M 644 f. 156v; MS Morgan M 429 f. 100v.

⁷⁴ *Beatus* 2, pp. 93-94.

⁷⁵ Apc 14, 6-11, the three angels; Apc 14, 14-17 harvest; *Beatus* 2, pp. 192 ff. and 197 ff. respectively. The horses of Apc 14, 29, commented upon by *Beatus* 2, pp. 199 and 209, are depicted in MS Morgan M 644 f. 178v, the Valladolid *Beatus*, f. 148v, MS Gerona ff. 193v-194r and elsewhere.

⁷⁶ *Beatus* 2, p. 192, "*celum ecclesia*". On Babylon as "*civitas diaboli*" and "*iste mundus*", see *Beatus* 2, pp. 193 f., commenting on Apc 14, 8, "*Cecidit, cecidit Babilon illa magna. Babilonem civitatem diaboli dicit. Civitas diaboli populus eius est et omnis contruptela et opera nequitiae, quam in persecutionem sui et humani generis exquirat. Nam sicut civitas Dei ecclesia est, ita e contrario civitas diaboli ista Iherusalem est, quam supra diximus, et Babilon, eo quod in hoc mundo in pace confusionis versetur*". See also *Beatus* 2, p. 195, and pp. 196 f. on gentiles, false Christians and true Christians, the three divisions of society that preoccupied Beatus constantly.

⁷⁷ MS Morgan M 644 f. 176v, with legend, "*ubi Babilon cecidit*".

the divergent destinies of the church above and of Babylon, represented below by falling arches and corpses, while in the codex from Tábara, Ende and Emeterius painted "those who gave the church to the Lord of heaven"⁷⁸ standing between the two (Fig. 9).

In the harvest of the earth, as understood by Beatus, heaven is again the church, which was also made concrete by several illuminators who in the accompanying picture painted the temple, whence emerges the angel brandishing the harvester's reaping hook.⁷⁹ John's words 'and the wine press was trodden outside the city',⁸⁰ provided Beatus with another image of the church:

For when the separation between the wicked and the good will have been accomplished, and Christ will have rendered to each according to his works, then the wine press will be trodden outside the city, that is, outside the church. For after the separation [of the good] every sinner will be outside. The treading of the wine press is the retribution for sins.⁸¹

Here also, events prophesied were events taking place in the church of Beatus' own time, where greed, lust and strife were the order of the day. "And what are the horses", he added, "if they are not the princes and rulers of the world, because through them the devil brings about his evil purposes all the more speedily?"⁸² At the same time, the walled city of the picture with its proud gate, promises liberation from these travails in the new epoch, when "every sinner will be outside".⁸³ The fact that the gate in the accompanying picture by Ende and Emeterius (Fig. 10) is closed adds emphasis to Beatus' statement.

The common assumptions of Beatus and his illustrators, in this instance their shared preoccupations with the city as both the fundamental unit of social existence and the means of expressing society's nature and its celestial goal, are

⁷⁸ MS Gerona f. 192, with legend "*isti dederunt ecclesiam domino celi*".

⁷⁹ MS Gerona ff. 193v-194r, temple in top right hand corner, whence emerges the angel with the reaping hook; the harvest of the earth is depicted in the centre register; the turreted city gate, horses with blood up to their bridles and winepress are at the bottom; *Beatus* 2, p. 203, "*angelum nuntium diximus et caelum et templum ecclesiam*".

⁸⁰ *Apc* 14, 20, "*Et calcatum est torcular extra civitatem*", where the Vulgate has *Et calcatus est lacus extra civitatem* – an obvious demonstration that Beatus and his illuminators were not using the Vulgate translation.

⁸¹ *Beatus* 2, p. 206.

⁸² *Beatus* 2, pp. 207; 209.

⁸³ *Beatus* 2, p. 206, "*facta discessione foris erit omnis homo peccati. Calcatio autem torcularis retributio est peccatorum, sicut dicit Iheremias excisa Iherusalem, Lacum calcavit Dominus virginis filiae Sion*".

especially clear in their treatment of the seventh vial of God's wrath. When the angel carrying this vial poured it out into the air, John had written,

there were flashes of lightening, voices, peals of thunder and a great earthquake. ... The great city was split into three parts, the cities of the nations fell ... and every island fled away.⁸⁴

This affliction was painted by illuminators of other Apocalypse manuscripts in general terms as falling upon a non-specific urban scene.⁸⁵ Not so the artists illustrating Beatus. Ende and Emeterius and the artists of another Beatus codex from Tábara that was completed five years earlier, showed the content of this vial descending upon the facade of a carefully delineated building. We see a portal flanked by open arches revealing a courtyard with trees, suggestive of the courtyard of a mosque like the one in Cordoba, where the Muslim faithful were accustomed to perform their ablutions (Fig. 11).⁸⁶ Maius, painting this same episode in the Escalada codex, took a different tack by showing the angel over a central gateway on either side of which stands a separate pair of arches with the caption "where the city is divided into three parts" (Fig. 12).⁸⁷ This picture relates explicitly both to the text of the Apocalypse and to Beatus' exegesis. For the division of the city into three parts articulated for Beatus his overriding concern with the sad reality that the church, in particular his own church was stricken by disunity, seeing that it comprised heretics, false teachers and hypocrites, in short, precursors of Antichrist. Such individuals were examples of the inevitable mingling of good and ill in the history of the sixth age as described by Augustine. Where Augustine, interpreting the role of Christians

⁸⁴ Apc 16, 17-20. For the connections between Beatus and his illustrators, see also above n. 38; below n. 118.

⁸⁵ Bamberg Apocalypse f. 41v.

⁸⁶ MS Gerona f. 206v; Tábara Beatus, Archivo Histórico Nacional, Madrid Codex 1097B (WILLIAMS, *The Illustrated Beatus* 2, No. 5) f. 117v. The first mosque of Cordoba was constructed under Abd al-Rahman I between 786 and 787, i.e. during Beatus' lifetime, but early enough to have been described for, or perhaps seen by his illustrators. It had a courtyard and a hypostyle hall of eleven bays, and was expanded later by Abd al-Rahman's successors. See J.D. DODDS, *Architecture and Ideology in Early Medieval Spain* (University Park, PA, 1990), pp. 95-106. Jerilyn Dodds points to a different representation of Islamic architecture in the Beatus codices, that of Belshazzar's feast in Daniel, which is shown taking place under an arch of polychrome masonry, like that of the mosque of Cordoba; see EAD., "Islam, Christianity and the problem of religious art", in: *The Art of Medieval Spain A.D. 500-1200*, (New York, 1993), pp. 27-37, at pp. 29-31.

⁸⁷ Apc 16, 19, generating the legend, "*ubi civitas divisa est in tres partes*", MS Morgan M 655 f. 193r.

within the late antique Roman empire, thought of the city on earth and the *civitas dei* as *permixtae*, intermingled in the present.⁸⁸ Beatus was confronted with the uneasy coexistence in the Spanish peninsula of Muslims and Jews, as well as Christians and “false Christians”. “We have often said in this book”, he wrote when explaining the seventh vial,

and repeat it yet again, that in all the world there are three kinds of people, of which two are of the devil and one of God. One part is outside the church, that is gentiles and infidels; and two are inside the church, one of which is the image of Antichrist, and the third is the church. Therefore the “great city” is all people everywhere, ... which will become three parts when the church will be separated, in such a way that the gentiles are one part, and the abomination of desolation is another part, and the church, which goes forth from its midst, is the third part.⁸⁹

By way of elucidating the identity of the three parts, Beatus continued:

The cities of the nations are those nations whom earlier we have described as pagan. Babylon is confusion and the abomination of desolation which is to be found inside the church under the name of Christianity. ... These are therefore the three parts, the gentiles, and Babylon, from which the people of God is commanded to go forth, and the islands and mountains [of John’s text] which fled away are the church. The church is said to flee away and not to be found, that is, it is not separated from the wicked. Babylon is wickedness in general, that opposes Jerusalem, whether in the gentiles or in false brethren ...

Completing his application of signs and numbers to John’s text, Beatus then concludes:

⁸⁸ Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, Ps 136, 1, ed. DEKKERS and FRAIPONT: “*Oblitos vos esse non arbitror, commendasse nos vobis, immo commemorasse vos, quod omnis eruditus in sancta ecclesia nosse debet unde cives simus, et ubi peregrinemur, et peregrinationis nostrae causam esse peccum, reversionis autem munus remissionem peccatorum et iustificationem gratiae Dei. Duae civitates permixtas sibi interim corpore, et corde separatas, currere per ista volumina saeculorum usque in finem audistis et nostis; unam cui finis est pax eterna, et vocatur Ierusalem; alteram cui gaudium est pax temporalis, et vocatur Babilonia. Interpretationes etiam nominum, si non fallor, tenetis: Ierusalem interpretari visionem pacis; Babyloniam confusionem*”. Further on this issue, MARKUS, *Saeculum*, chapter 7.

⁸⁹ See also, the same point made in the summary that precedes the commentary, *Beatus* 1, p. 55: “*Et facta est civitas illa magna in tres partes. Civitas magna omnis omnino populus est, quisquis est sub caelo, qui fiet in tres partes cum ecclesia divisa fuerit: ut sit gentilitas una pars, et abominatio vastationis altera, et ecclesia quae exit de medio ipsius tertia*”.

And the islands are the seven churches, as Isaiah says, "The water of the sea shall be troubled by the splendour of the Lord: therefore the splendour of the Lord shall be before the islands, and the name of the Lord shall be radiant before the islands of the sea".⁹⁰

Beatus' idea of the threefold division of society into Christians, false Christians and infidels is represented in the picture of the city falling apart into three parts, while the role in this division of infidels, that is of Muslims, is highlighted in the picture of the gate and colonnades giving access to a courtyard with trees.

4. Separation

John's accumulating visions of afflictions poured out upon the earth by divine wrath culminate with the ultimate destruction of "Babylon the Great", followed by the thousand-year kingdom of the saints, the day of judgement and the revelation of the celestial Jerusalem. In his commentary, Beatus expounded these final stages of the Apocalypse by describing Babylon as the city of the devil, while the heavenly Jerusalem was the long-awaited city of God. The vocabulary of mingling and threefold division is thus supplanted by a more clear-cut vocabulary of distinction and separation of the two cities from each other.⁹¹ The final manifestation of Babylon as the city of the devil was seized upon by Beatus' illustrators, who produced a series of magnificent images showing how "Babylon, that is, this world, is on fire" to illustrate the opening of Jerome's commentary on Daniel that follows the work of Beatus in the extant codices. But in two of these codices, even this image was not left without a last reference to Beatus' central definition of the sixth age. For in the Gerona codex, the city gate of Babylon is depicted sheltering the "Ark of the covenant of the Lord", and in the one from San Miguel de Escalada, the arches above the gate contain the sarcophagi of Ananias, Azarias and Misael (cf. Fig. 3).⁹²

The sojourn of these sacred emblems in Babylon epitomizes Beatus' vision of the unseparated state of the church and of the content of history in the sixth age. Toledo was by this time occupied by Muslims, but some at least of Beatus' readers may have remembered the inscriptions which King Wamba had placed

⁹⁰ Beatus 2, pp. 258, 259, 260.

⁹¹ see especially Beatus 2, p. 306: "*hic ostendit [Iohannes] Babilonem in duas divisam esse partes, id est populus Dei et populus diaboli*". See also Beatus 2, pp. 423-424, juxtaposition of the gates of the city of God and those of the *civitas diaboli*. According to Beatus, Antichrist and the devil are not the same; see Beatus 1, pp. 208-210 differentiating the two.

⁹² MS Morgan M 429 f. 147r; MS Gerona ff. 236v-237r, cf. above, n. 36.

over the gates, calling upon the martyrs whose relics rested in the city for their protection.

So far, we have watched the interconnected unfolding of an imagery of the church and the terrestrial city, and also of Babylon the Great and of the city of the devil in Beatus and his illustrators. Both in the commentary and in its illustrations, this imagery underpins a parallel sequence of events that leads to the depiction and emergence of the celestial Jerusalem. This parallel unfolding in turn is rooted in the text of the Apocalypse. For here, outpourings of divine wrath upon the wicked that accompany the opening of the seven seals, the sounding of the seven trumpets and the spilling of the seven vials of plagues over the earth, interlock with revelations of holy actions, objects and structures that articulate the dealings of God with his saints. To the emergence of the celestial Jerusalem we now turn.

When the fifth seal was opened, John saw "under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God". They were calling on God to avenge them but were told to wait until the number of their fellow servants who were also to die was complete.⁹³ Beatus' illustrators, like Beatus himself, connected this episode with the resurrection of the "souls of those who had been slain for the testimony of Jesus" and were to rule for a thousand years before the last judgement at the end of the Apocalypse⁹⁴ that preceded the ultimate separation of the intermingled cities. The souls waiting are depicted in the late antique manner as birds, and they sit, as the legend in the painting of the Tábara codex has it, under "the altar of our Lord",⁹⁵ while the legend of the Escalada codex describes it as the "golden altar" (Fig. 13). The souls of those who were to rule for a thousand years were also depicted as birds sitting underneath an altar,⁹⁶

⁹³ Apc 6, 9-11.

⁹⁴ Apc 6, 9-11 and Apc 20, 4-6; here note verse 4, where the Vulgate reads "*animas decollatorum propter testimonium Iesu*", but Beatus has (Beatus 2, p. 349) "*animas occisorum propter testimonium Iesu*". This reading approximates the text to his discussion of Apc 6, 9, where Beatus has "*vidi sub ara Dei*" (Vulgate "*subtus altare*") "*animas interfectorum*", but in the heading for this section he wrote, "*Incipit storia de animabus occisorum in libro quarto*". This juxtaposition of the two texts is reflected in the pictures; see below n. 88.

⁹⁵ in the lower register both of MS Gerona f. 129r and MS Morgan M 644 f. 109r we see the saints who are to wait with the 'white' robes (but in the picture the robes are of several colours) they were given according to Apc 6, 11. This same episode is depicted in the Silos fragment, thought to be the oldest surviving Beatus image. See the round table discussion "Consideraciones en torno al fragmento 4 de Silos", *Actas del simposio para el estudio de los códices del "Comentario al Apocalipsis" de Beato de Liébano*, 3 vols. (Madrid, 1978-1980), 2, pp. 317-328; WILLIAMS, *The Illustrated Beatus* 2, pp. 17-20.

⁹⁶ MS Gerona f. 225r; MS Morgan M 644 f. 214r depicting Apc 20, 4-6, and matching the image for Apc 6, 9-11, where these same souls as birds are sitting under an altar, MS Morgan M

while in the upper register we see them in their resurrected bodies seated on thrones giving judgement – an activity which, according to Beatus, was already taking place in his own time when priests and all the faithful exhorted each other in fraternal love (Fig. 14).⁹⁷ The altars under which the birds repose recall the altars in the seven churches of Asia at the outset of Beatus' commentary (cf. Figs. 1-2),⁹⁸ and indeed, Beatus himself observed that the altar that John had referred to should be understood in both heavenly and terrestrial terms.⁹⁹

The observation has a liturgical relevance, because the liturgy was the primary vehicle through which heaven and earth were linked. When gathered for worship, Christians sang with the angels and prayed for the dead.¹⁰⁰ Between Easter and Pentecost, liturgical reading included regular sections from the Apocalypse, and a possible use of Beatus' commentary was to provide material for sermons on these readings.¹⁰¹ Liturgical action was also expressed visually, as for example by images of souls as birds feeding on the verdure of paradise, awaiting the resurrection of their bodies.¹⁰² The homecoming of the living and the dead in the celestial city that was anticipated in the liturgy is expressed particularly graphically on the floor mosaic depicting birds in a vine-

644 f. 109r; MS Gerona f. 129r.

⁹⁷ Beatus 2, pp. 350-1: "*De praesenti hoc loco, non de futuro Dominus dixit*". See further, on past, present and future, Beatus 2, p. 353: "*et sancti viventes et animae occisorum sanctorum regnant cum Domino et hic et in futuro. Sed quia regnaverunt dixit, hoc profecto intellege, quod quasi iam factum est quod futurum erit, quia ante Deum nihil novum est. Sic enim antequam Christus veniret in mundo, dictum est, Diviserunt sibi vestimenta mea*".

⁹⁸ E.g. MS Gerona f. 89v, Sardis; MS Morgan M 429 f. 50r, Sardis.

⁹⁹ Beatus 1, pp. 569 f.

¹⁰⁰ Prayers for the dead, see M. FEROTIN, *Le Liber Ordinum en usage dans l'église wisigothique et mozarabe d'Espagne* (Paris, 1904; repr. Westmead, 1969), pp. 103-153, 223; see also, on the uses of the Facundus Beatus, produced for Fernando I and Queen Sancha, O.K. WERCKMEISTER, "The first romanesque Beatus manuscripts and the liturgy of death", in: *Actas del simposio para el estudio de los codices del "Comentario al Apocalipsis"*, 2, pp. 167-200.

¹⁰¹ J. FONTAINE, "Fuentes y tradiciones paleocristianas en el método espiritual de Beato, in *Actas del Simposio para el estudio de los codices del "Comentario al Apocalipsis"*, 1, pp. 77-105 at p. 198; for the readings see *Liber Commicus*, ed. J. PEREZ DE URBEL and A. GONZALEZ Y RUIZ ZORILLA (Madrid, 1955), pp. 388-438, *passim*.

¹⁰² The lid of the sarcophagus of Ithacius in Santa Maria, Oviedo, shows on the short side the Chi Rho with alpha and omega in a wreath flanked by pairs of birds drinking from a vase with vine scrolls. Note also the tomb mosaic of Baleria in the Museo Arqueológico Municipal of Manacor, Mallorca, displaying a pair of doves above the epitaph; see H. SCHLUNK and T. HAUSCHILD, *Die Denkmäler der frühchristlichen und westgotischen Zeit* (Mainz, 1978), pp. 138-139 and pp. 180-181 respectively.

scroll that surrounded the altar of the late antique basilica of Es Fornás de Torelló on Menorca (Fig. 15).¹⁰³

Like other Christians of his own and an earlier day, Beatus loved anticipating the celestial city in the here and now. Chronological sequence and the lapse of historical time thus interested him much less than did an understanding of the past that made of it signs and patterns whereby to recognize events of the present and the future that pointed to the culmination and end of time. This was a feasible undertaking because, first, everything of any significance – whether this was events in the life of Christ, or more broadly, events in the unfolding of the sixth age – had been prophesied. And second, events, whether they were recurring disasters, or whether they were activities of the faithful that would come to fruition in the celestial city, were by their very nature repetitive. All things were simultaneous in the knowledge of God; moreover, signs such as the number seven and the altar in heaven beneath which the souls of the just found rest made this simultaneity accessible to human cognition. We thus return to Beatus' use of seven as an organizing code in his anticipation of the last times, but now with a more explicit focus on the coming of the heavenly Jerusalem.

When the Lamb opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven and John saw seven angels with seven trumpets, and another angel

stood at the altar with a golden censer. And he was given much incense to mingle with the prayers of the saints ... Then the angel took the censer and filled it with fire from the altar and threw it on the earth.¹⁰⁴ And there were peals of thunder, voices, flashes of lightening and an earthquake ... [Then] the first angel blew his trumpet and there followed hail and fire mixed with blood which fell on the earth,¹⁰⁵

burning up a third of the earth, and of the trees and all the green grass.

The seven angels, Beatus explained, were the seven churches going forth to preach. The voices and thunder were the sound of preaching, while the earthquake signified the persecutions suffered by the church wherever it preached.¹⁰⁶ Those who rejected the preaching incurred God's anger, and this was expressed by the afflictions that the blowing of the first trumpet released.

¹⁰³ The floor mosaic surrounding the altar shows pairs of peacocks drinking from a vase on opposite sides of the foot of the altar, with other birds feeding off the grapes on a vine-scroll on the two other sides (SCHLUNK and HAUSCHILD, *Die Denkmäler*, pp. 181-184).

¹⁰⁴ MS Gerona f. 148r; MS Morgan M 644 f. 133v.

¹⁰⁵ Apc 8, 3-7, *passim*; *Beatus* 2, pp. 1 ff.

¹⁰⁶ Note MS Morgan M 644 f. 83r and MS Gerona f. 107r, illustrating Apc 4, 5 "*de trono procedunt fulgura et voces et tonitrua*", shown in the pictures as arrows. *Beatus* 1, p. 453, explains the *fulgura* etc. as the preaching of the church.

The burning of earth, trees and green grass that is depicted in some codices¹⁰⁷ signified the three parts, or three orders of human beings, the faithful, false Christians and unbelievers, of whom the latter two were in due course to perish as one.¹⁰⁸

The censer held by the angel on the altar was the body of Christ and the altar was the church. For, as Beatus wrote,

the Lord took upon himself a body, that is, the church – because in the body of Christ, the faithful by imitating Christ are joined to him as a member – and by doing his father's will he filled the church with fire from the altar, that is from his power, when he said, As the father sent me to suffering, so I send you to suffering, which consists of sacrifice and the propitiation of God. For in these [actions] the church receives all power in heaven and in earth, when she performs that sacrifice to God which the Lord [himself] offers.¹⁰⁹

Ende and Emeterius depicted Beatus' meaning exactly in the codex from Tábara when they showed John looking up to the angel of the church of Sardis who is leaning over the parapet on the side of his church swinging a censer, while inside the church, the chalice stands ready for the celebration of the eucharist, to wit the "sacrifice which the Lord himself offers" (Fig. 2).¹¹⁰ All this, however, happened in time, when the three parts, Christians, false brethren, and unbelievers, or, in John's image as read by Beatus, earth, trees and green grass, had not yet been separated.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁷ MS Morgan M 644 f. 134v; MS Gerona f. 149r; Urgell Beatus (WILLIAMS, *The Illustrated Beatus* 3, No. 8) f. 37r; Facundus Beatus, f. 163v; on Apc 8, 6-7, all depict the tripartite nature of the destruction.

¹⁰⁸ Apc 8, 7, "*et tertia pars terrae combustum est et tertia pars arborum combustum est et omne faenum viridum combustum est*". Beatus comments, *Beatus* 2 pp. 6-7: "*Terra, arbores, fenum, hoc omne unum est. Tres partes dixit quia tres ordines sunt, id est, ecclesia, et falsi fratres qui Christiani dicuntur, tertia est de infidelibus. Contra has duae partes, geminum malum, pugnat ecclesia: et hae duae partes contra ecclesiam pugnant. Sic Deus per Zachariam promittit percutere pastores et adhaerentes sibi in toto orbe, et eruere oves, et ex tribus partibus unum liberare, duas vero interire, id est gentiles et christianos malos, qui solum nomine christiani sunt, opere vero gentiles sunt. Et istae partes duae sunt. Et duobus modis a Deo recedit homo, aut fide aut opera. Nam sicut qui fidem non habet a Deo alienus est, ita qui opere recedit ab omnipotente Deo alienus dicitur, etiam si in ecclesia fidem tenere videatur. Has tres partes [dicit] esse in omnem terram, unam ex his liberandam, quae sunt oves, quod est ecclesia*".

¹⁰⁹ *Beatus* 2, p. 4.

¹¹⁰ MS Gerona f. 89v.

¹¹¹ *Beatus* 2, p. 5, about the persecutions of the church: "*Haec dixit facta in tempore, et in omnes directae potestates usque in finem*".

Separation was a process that defined the nature of history; its unfolding was marked by signs that rendered the process intelligible. The earth was afflicted both by human wickedness and the resulting punishment of God while at the same time signs pointed to the completion of time. The temple in heaven stood open while Antichrist in the guise of the beast from the abyss pranced across the earth.¹¹² It was thrown open once more after the harvest of the earth had been accomplished,¹¹³ when seven angels emerged from it and were given vials of affliction by one of the four living creatures from the side of God's throne.¹¹⁴ We see the seven angels standing beneath the open doors of the temple, which in the codex from Tábara painted by Ende and Emeterius is flanked by seven stars, while one of the four creatures flies down to fill the vials held by the angels with divine wrath.¹¹⁵ What the vials contained, at the same time, was the sweet scent of the prayers of the saints and of the church's preaching. This in turn was published abroad by the four creatures, who as Beatus had explained earlier, were signs of the four evangelists.¹¹⁶

The seven vials and the seven angels and the seven trumpets and the four creatures are all one and the same thing, and one church. And the word of preaching and the anger of God and the fire that went forth from the mouth of the witnesses, all this is one and the same thing. ... The sweet scents are the same as the anger of God, for the prayers of the saints, which are the fire going forth from the mouths of the witnesses, are to the world anger, which is preached by means of the law and the gospel.¹¹⁷

John did not specify which of the four creatures filled the seven vials. But several illuminators, including Ende and Emeterius, in accord with Beatus' interpretation of the four creatures as the four evangelists, chose the eagle, sign of the evangelist and visionary John, adding by way of explanation the words: "This animal gave the seven vials to the angels". In the picture, accordingly, John's "preaching and the anger of God", depicted as the evangelist's eagle

¹¹² MS Morgan M 655 f. 156v; MS Morgan M 429 f. 100v.

¹¹³ Apc 14, 14-17; see above, at notes 75 ff.

¹¹⁴ Apc 15, 1-8, with *Beatus* 2, pp. 216-220.

¹¹⁵ MS Gerona f. 198r; MS Morgan M 644 f. 183v.

¹¹⁶ Apc 4, 7 about the four animals, echoing Hezekiel's vision (Ez 1, 10); see *Beatus* 1, pp. 462 ff., and p. 466 on the evangelist John: "*quartum animal, simile aquilae volantis, Iohannem dicit, qui in Asia evangelium ultimus scripsit, incipiens a verbo, ut ostenderet eundem Salvatorem, qui pro nobis dignatus est et nasci et pati, ipsum ante saecula Dei verbum esse: ipsum e caelo venisse et post mortem ad caelum iterum remeasse*". The statement could be read as correcting the Adoptionist theology of Elipandus.

¹¹⁷ *Beatus* 2, p. 219, commenting on "*apertum est templum*", Apc 15, 5-8.

sallying headlong from the open doors of the temple, pours divine anger upon human wickedness (Fig. 16).¹¹⁸ The vision of the open temple, itself a foreshadowing of the celestial city is thus paired with God's judgement of the world. In short, the construction of signs and images referring to the church, the holy city of Jerusalem and society at large interlock with the progressive manifestation of the devil's city of Babylon and of the city of God with which Beatus' commentary concludes. This outcome, Beatus thought, even though it could only be perceived darkly in the here and now, did become more explicitly discernible to the eyes of faith.¹¹⁹

5. The Measure of Faith

One final set of texts and images will explain this progressive comprehension that faith could achieve while also showing how Beatus envisioned that his readers would put his teaching into practice, how, in short, the city built in heaven was ultimately to materialize in the midst of an apparently disintegrating world.

After the sixth angel had blown his trumpet and idolaters, murderers, fornicators, sorcerers and thieves had not repented,¹²⁰ John was handed a measuring rod and was commanded to measure the temple of God, omitting, however,

¹¹⁸ MS Gerona f. 198r, "*Iste animal dedit angelis septem fialas*", and similar phrasing elsewhere, e.g. Valladolid Beatus, f. 198r; San Millán Beatus, f. 185v (see S. DE SILVA Y VERASTEGUI, "El Beato Emilianense", pp. 72-75); Facundus Beatus, f. 213r; Saint Sever Beatus, f. 178v. The Escorial Beatus (WILLIAMS, *The Illustrated Beatus* 3, No. 10) has a unique depiction of this episode, showing the eagle flying atop the open temple and handing the vial to an angel: f. 123v. The deliberate nature of the choice made by Emeterius, Ende (cf. above n. 38 and at nn. 85 ff.) and the other painters in this group is highlighted when we compare other illustrated Apocalypses. See e.g. the Bamberg Apocalypse for Apc 15,1-7, i.e. this same episode of the seven vials. F. 38v shows, in two superimposed registers, how (on top) the seven angels are given their vials by another angelic figure. The first angel, at the same time, is pouring out his vial. In the lower register, those who had conquered the beast play harps while standing on a sea of glass, just as John described.

¹¹⁹ See Beatus 1, pp. 387-388, "*Non enim virtus requirenda est, sed fides. Neque enim una mulier Iudith Olofernem per virtutem occidit, sed per fidem. Nec credendum erat, ut infirmus sexus arripere manu propria gladium, trucidare persecutorem ecclesiae et hostium cuneos expugnare quiret. Non fuit hoc temeritatis audacia, sed constantia et virilitatis fiducia. Filii quoque Israel, cui tot mirabilia virtutum patuerant, de Dei fiducia dubitantes diversis cladibus oppressi perierunt in eremo*". Beatus 2, p. 499, commenting on Apc 4, 8, "*et INTUS PLENA SUNT OCULIS. Intus dixit, quod malis occultum sit lumen evangelii, quod non nisi a sanctis fidei oculis adspicitur*".

¹²⁰ Apc 9, 13, 20-21.

the courtyard, which was given over to the nations that were to trample over the holy city.¹²¹ The pictures show John receiving the measuring rod from the angel and using it to measure the dimensions of the temple's central arch, beneath which there is an altar.¹²² In the codex from San Miguel de Escalada, Maius depicted the temple as a section of a Visigothic or Asturian church in which a central nave is surmounted by a triumphal arch over the sanctuary and flanked by aisles at left and right (Fig. 17).¹²³ In the aisles of this edifice the representatives of the nations, mentioned by John, are offering worship; Beatus described these individuals more specifically as false brethren, "who seem to belong to the church but are outside".¹²⁴

John's visions culminated with his sighting of the holy city, the new Jerusalem coming out of heaven, which for Beatus was the church, "the city built on a mountain".¹²⁵ The angel who showed John the holy city had a golden measuring rod to measure its length, breadth and height, which were all equal.¹²⁶ When discussing how John measured the temple, Beatus had explained the measuring rod as the "measure of faith" in the Trinity.¹²⁷ In his description of the holy city, he returned to the measure of faith as adumbrated by the golden rod.

¹²¹ Apc 11, 1-3; *Beatus* 2, pp. 64-65; next comes the *storia* of the two witnesses, sc. "of Elijah or of the law and the gospel", above at nn. 63 ff.

¹²² MS Gerona f. 161v; MS Morgan M 644 f. 146r.

¹²³ An example is San Juan de Baños near Palencia, dedicated by King Recceswinth in 661 (see SCHLUNK and HAUSCHILD, *Die Denkmäler*, pp. 204-209). Other Visigothic churches display a similar tripartite division of the space for the laity, but the closest architectural approximation to Beatus' conception of the tripartite division of the society of his time is the church of Reccopolis, dedicated by King Leovigild in 578 (at Cerro de la Oliva near Zorita de los Canes, Guadalajara (see SCHLUNK and HAUSCHILD, *Die Denkmäler*, pp. 169-171). This cruciform church was entered through a narthex giving access to a nave that is flanked on its long sides by two narrow rooms of the same length as the nave. The two rooms were accessible from the narthex and also from the transept, but were separated from the nave by a wall. However, the fact that this floor-plan appears to be unique in Visigothic and early medieval Spain makes a direct connection between it and the imagery of the Beatus codices a little unlikely. Cf. E.C. PARKER, "Architecture as liturgical setting", in: *The Liturgy in the Middle Ages*, ed. T.J. HEFFERNAN and A.E. MATTER (Kalamazoo, 2001), pp. 273-326, a useful survey but omitting any mention of Spain.

¹²⁴ *Beatus* 2, p. 65, commenting on Apc 11, 2; the image: MS Morgan f. 146r.

¹²⁵ *Beatus* 2, p. 387, commenting on Apc 21, 10.

¹²⁶ Apc 21, 2, 15-17. MS Morgan M 644 f. 222v; MS Morgan M 429 f. 140r.

¹²⁷ *Beatus* 2, p. 64, "*haec est arundo, mensura fidei*". Beatus described the Trinity as the omnipotent Father, Christ begotten of the Father before time began, and the holy Spirit who had been preached by the prophets. Note the extended definition of the Holy Spirit: "*Spiritus Sanctum, donum et pignus immortalitatis, hunc per prophetas praedicatum, hunc per legem conscriptum, hunc esse manum Dei et Verbum Patris et conditorem orbis*".

In the golden rod, John shows forth human beings and the church, fragile indeed, yet golden. In the rod we understand human fragility and in the gold we behold wisdom in fragility ... [John calls the rod] the measure of the church, and spiritually you should apply this to all the saints ... In the golden rod we see the faith in the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ, who taking up the flesh of human fragility, has become the example of our salvation ... Through him alone can the measure of faith, the purity of the holy city, the measure of its gates and the height of its walls be known.¹²⁸

The measure of faith, as Beatus went on to explain, consists in imitating the patriarchs, prophets and apostles – who are signified in the number of the holy city's twelve gates and the dimensions of its walls – in both faith and works. The measure of faith, the rod with which John measured the temple, and the golden rod used by the angel to measure the holy city were thus the instrument whereby false brethren, heretics, lazy priests and negligent monks could be recognized. In short, these sinners were designated through yet another set of signs.¹²⁹ Signs also reveal the holy city in the here and now:

The church and the holy city are not two different things. [The church] is one and the same and always descends from God [and] from heaven in penitence, because, imitating the Son of God in penitence, [the church] is said to descend with humility ... The descent of the Son of God is his incarnation. This city descends from God every day by imitating him, that is, by following the footsteps of the Son of God.¹³⁰

Beatus' meaning was taken up in the images created by his illustrators, which drew attention to the convergence between the holy city built in heaven and cities on earth. The holy city is composed of the same architectural components – gates and portals with turrets – as the cities on earth that appear earlier (Fig. 18).¹³¹ The gate of Jerusalem besieged (Fig. 6),¹³² the city gate of the harvest of the earth (Fig. 10),¹³³ the facade of the city divided into three

¹²⁸ *Beatus* 2, p. 394.

¹²⁹ *Beatus* 2, p. 387; note MS Gerona ff. 52v-53r, depicting the mission of the apostles. All twelve are shown, in a row and of equal height, highlighting the equal importance of the different churches that the apostles founded (Rome the see of Peter thus was not recognized as having special claims). In the unfolding of the city in heaven, accordingly, all the apostles are once again shown as equal, each in his gate.

¹³⁰ *Beatus* 2, p. 387.

¹³¹ MS Morgan M 644 f. 122v.

¹³² MS Morgan M 644 f. 151r.

¹³³ MS Morgan M 644 f. 178v; MS Gerona ff. 193v-194r.

parts (Fig. 12),¹³⁴ and of course the portals of the seven churches of Asia (Figs. 1-2) are all foreshadowings, signs of the holy city. In the Tábara codex, where Ende and Emeterius painted a facade, not a bird's eye view of the celestial Jerusalem, the proximity is yet closer: the pearly gates and turrets of the heavenly Jerusalem are simply an elaborated four-storeyed version of city and other gateways such as the one flanked by arches with trees (Fig. 11)¹³⁵ where the seventh angel is pouring out his vial of divine wrath that simultaneously stands for the prayers of the saints.

Once John had seen the holy city, he returned to the ordinary time of the sixth age in order to deliver his messages to the seven churches. In the codex from Tábara, Ende and Emeterius depicted Christ enthroned in heaven (Fig. 19). Below, John falls at the feet of the angel who had talked with him at the beginning,¹³⁶ and he stands looking at the seven arches, each sheltering an altar, that represent the seven churches of Asia and the church universal. The story has reached its completion (Figs. 4-5).¹³⁷ The city built in heaven has been constructed out of the images, the signs, that were made available by the city on earth. Conversely, once the vision of the city built in heaven has been attained, it can reorient the earthly components, the signs out of which it had been constructed, towards their true goal. Even so, the vision of an as yet invisible object of love¹³⁸ is not equivalent to beholding that object when fully revealed.

The reason for this difference lies in the unseparated condition of the society of the saints and of the church where signs were ambivalent, so that even the measure of faith provided only guidelines, not certainties. The city built in heaven was to emerge in the seventh age, outside of time and of whatever can be imagined in time. Even so, Emeritus and Ende developed imagery even for that. The city in heaven, John had said, contained no temple, for its temple was God himself.¹³⁹ Emeritus and Ende, like all the other artists who illustrated the text of Beatus, thus represented it without altars and without any of the paraphernalia of worship, crosses, lamps, votive crowns and chalices,¹⁴⁰ that appear elsewhere in their pictures. The seven churches to which

¹³⁴ MS Morgan M 644 f. 193r.

¹³⁵ MS Gerona f. 230v, the heavenly city; MS Tábara (Madrid, Archivo Histórico Nacional Cod. 1097B, WILLIAMS, *The Illustrated Beatus*, 2, No. 5), f. 117v, and MS Gerona f. 206v, illustrating the seventh angel of Apc 16, 17-21; above at n. 79.

¹³⁶ Apc 22, 8-9 with *Beatus* 2, pp. 419 f. MS Gerona f. 234v.

¹³⁷ For the beginning of the story, see MS Gerona f. 36v.

¹³⁸ Cf. *Beatus* 2, p. 352, quoting 1 Cor 13, 2-3 in his exegesis of the *storia* about "the thrones and the souls of those who were killed", for which see above at nn. 93 ff.

¹³⁹ Apc 21, 22, a passage on which Beatus did not comment.

¹⁴⁰ E.g. MS Gerona f. 1v; MS Morgan M 644 f. 77r; MS Gerona ff. 71r, 100r; MS Morgan M

John returned, however, did contain altars because they existed in the sixth age, and the rituals that the ministers of those churches performed only pointed to the seventh age without reaching it.¹⁴¹ Once that seventh age was attained, no further pointers or signs were needed.

The story of the Apocalypse as interpreted by Beatus describes the mingling of church and world, and the unseparated condition of the church during the sixth age. Separation was to come about in the seventh age that pertained to the city built in heaven, the age of rest that matched the seventh day of creation when God rested.¹⁴² Signs were useful and indeed indispensable for the purpose of making statements about the seventh age. But like language, even the language of Scripture and exegesis, signs were in the last resort self-referential. Augustine had struggled for most of his life with the question whether language could reach a reality beyond itself.¹⁴³ Beatus thought that it could not, which is why he set aside narrative and the specificity of historical events so as to explore the meaning of signs, a system of pointers designed to reach beyond itself and yet embedded as deeply as language was in the contingency and ambivalence of terrestrial existence.

429 f. 50r.

¹⁴¹ Painters other than Emeterius and Ende, who illustrated the Gerona codex, however, showed the seven churches to which John returns without altars and implements of cult. See, e.g. MS Morgan M 644 f. 231v; Urgell Beatus, f. 192v; Facundus Beatus, f. 262r – the artist of this codex appears not to have been interested in this issue, since the seven churches of the beginning of the *Apocalypse* have no altars either (similarly in MS Morgan M 644 ff. 48r, 52v. etc.).

¹⁴² *Beatus* 2, p. 386; cf. for the twenty-four elders, the patriarchs, the twelve apostles along with bishops, and Christians at large, all within the one church of the one Christ, see *Beatus* 1, pp. 450 ff.

¹⁴³ C. ANDO, "Augustine on language", *Revue des Études Augustiniennes* 40 (1994), pp. 45-78.



Fig. 1 Morgan Beatus M 644, f. 48r, John gives a writing tablet to the angel of the church of Ephesus, depicted as a city gate.



Fig. 2 Gerona Beatus, f. 89v, the angel of the church of Sardis swinging a censer speaks with John. The church is depicted as a facade of a church of three apses. The chalice stands on the altar at the end of the nave, while the altars at the end of the naves are bare.

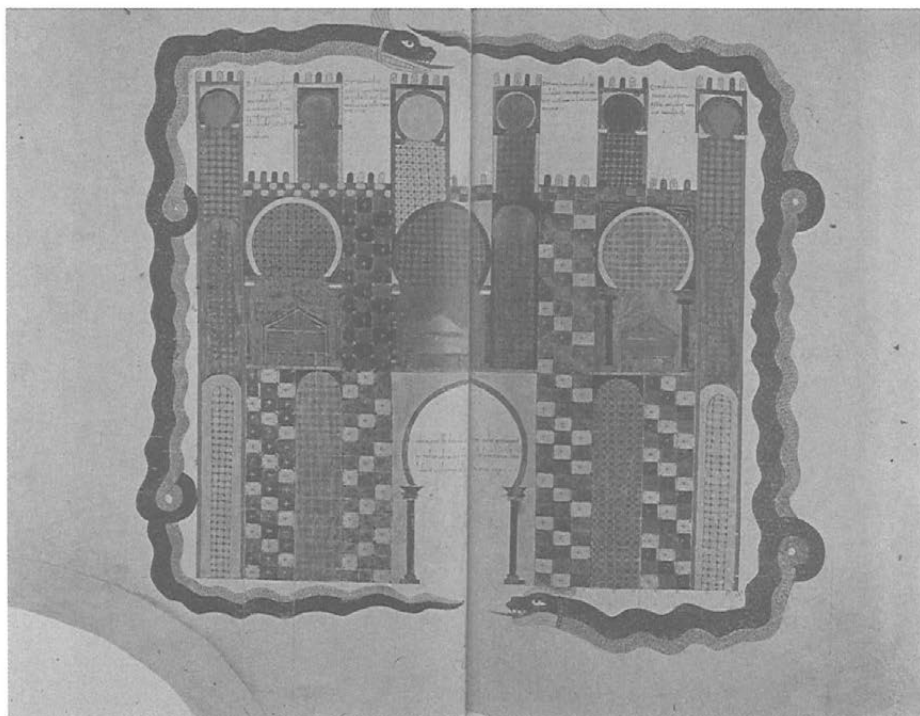


Fig. 3 Gerona Beatus, ff. 236v-237r, the city gate of Babylon, showing, in the top storey, three coffers labelled *Arca testamenti Domini*.



Fig. 4 Morgan Beatus, M 644, f. 27r, top: John before the throne of Christ, with seven lamps and seven stars. Bottom: John looks at a structure of four arches surmounted by another three arches, representing the seven churches of Asia (cf. Fig. 18).

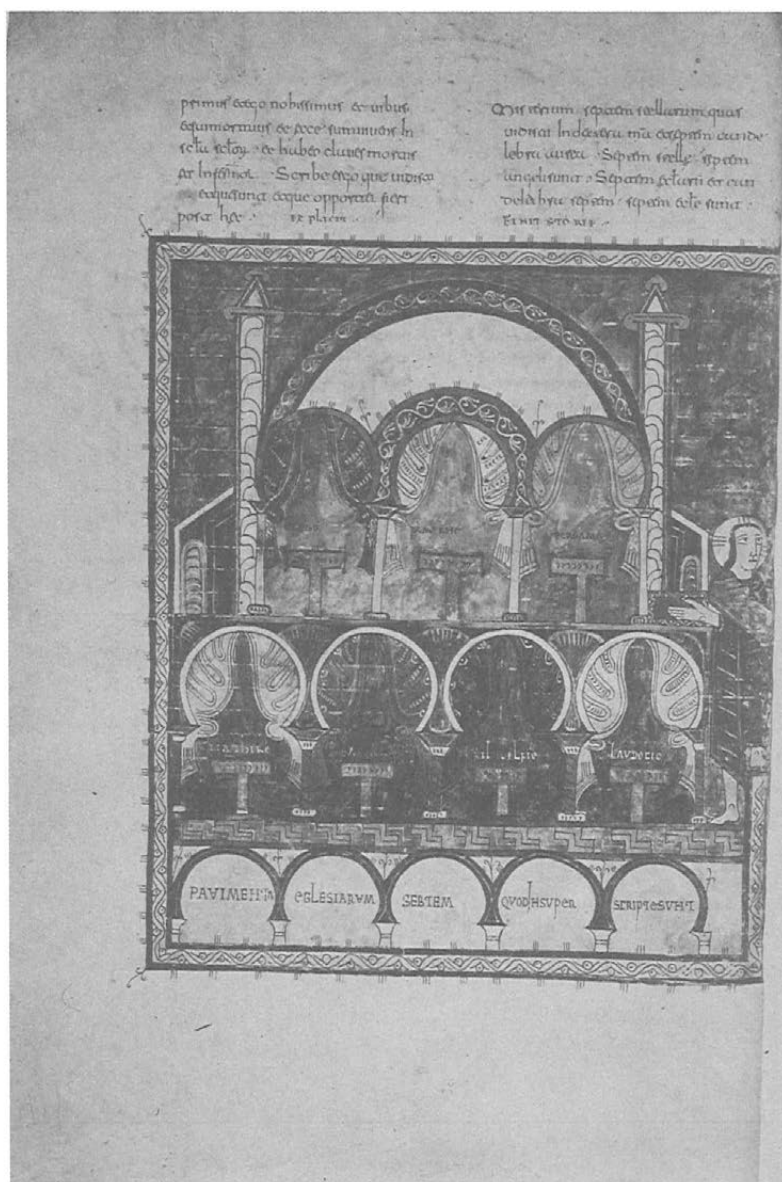


Fig. 5 Gerona Beatus, f. 36v, John standing to one side of an edifice of four arches surmounted by another three arches, the whole framed by one single arch, turrets and flanking structures denoting both the distinctness and the unity of the seven churches of Asia (cf. Fig. 18).

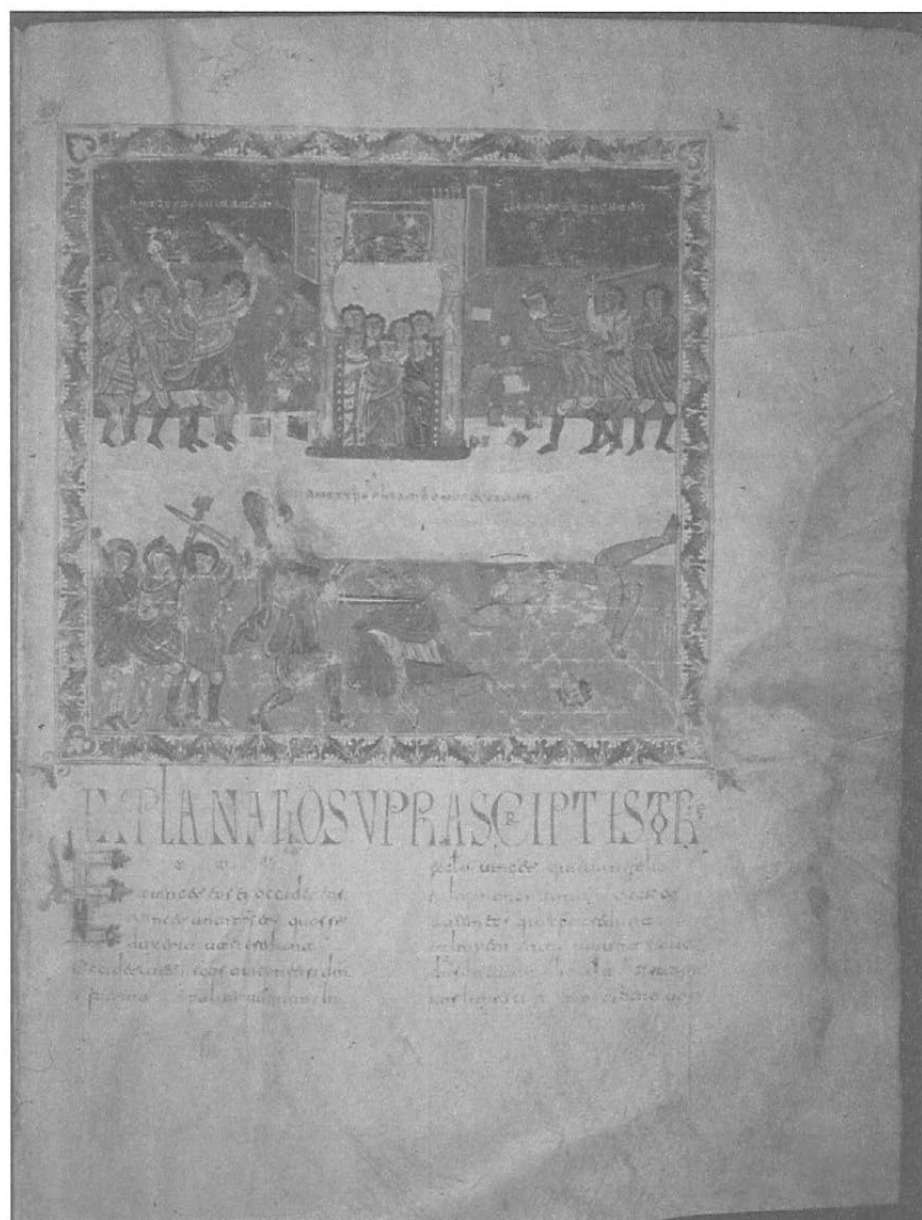


Fig. 6 Morgan Beatus, M 644, f. 151r, top: the siege of Jerusalem; the city is depicted in pictorial shorthand by walls and a city gate. Below, the death of the witnesses.

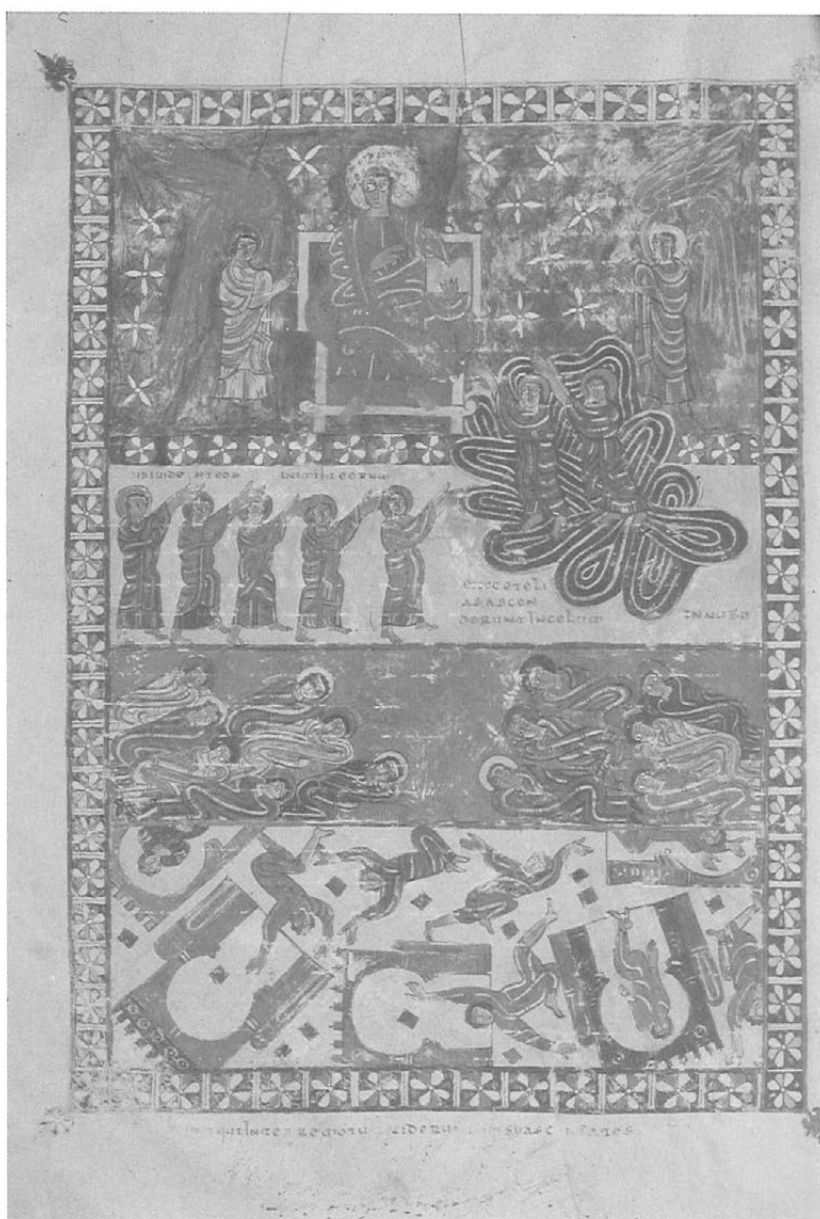


Fig. 7 Morgan Beatus, M 644 f. 154v, the witnesses ascend to Christ on a cloud, with the legend explaining *ubi vident eos inimici eorum*. Below, the destruction of the city in an earthquake.

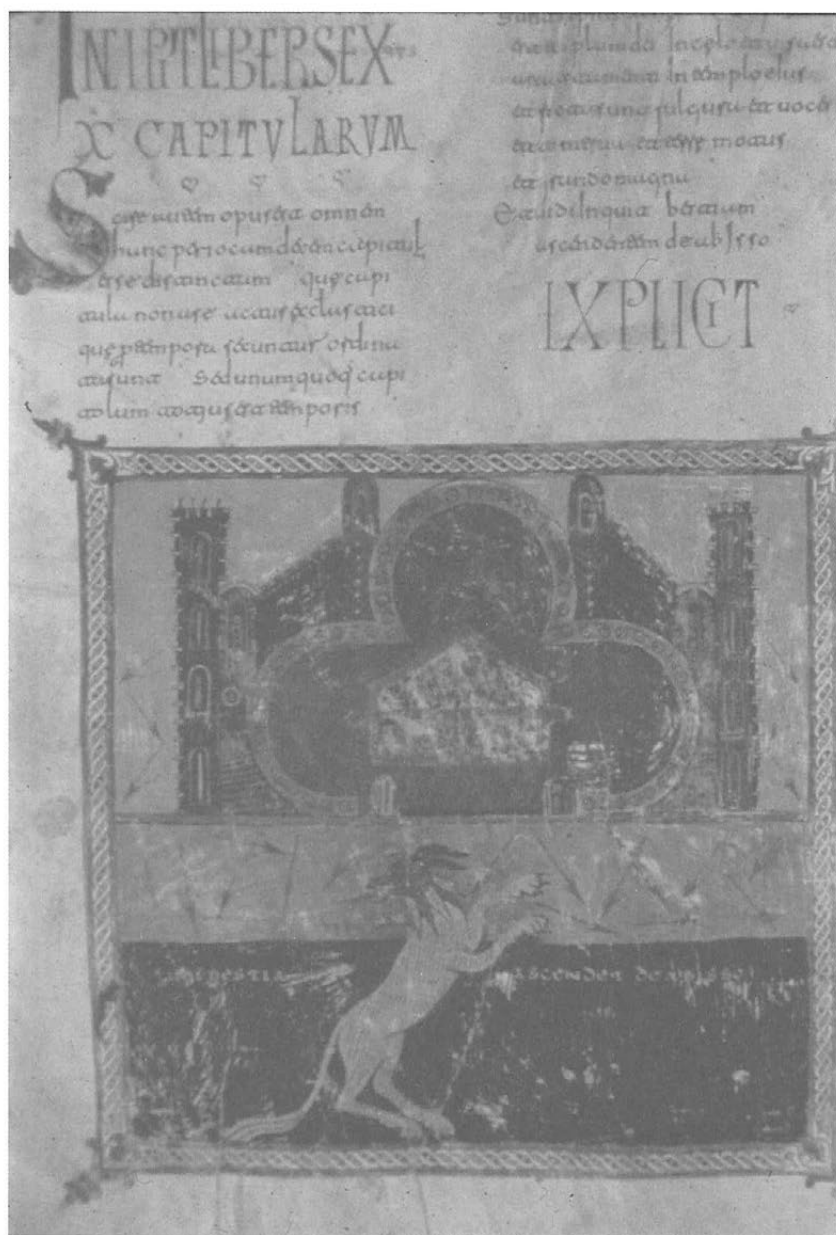


Fig. 8 Morgan Beatus, M 644, f. 156v, the open temple, depicted as a fanciful city gate with the Ark of the Covenant, and below, the beast.

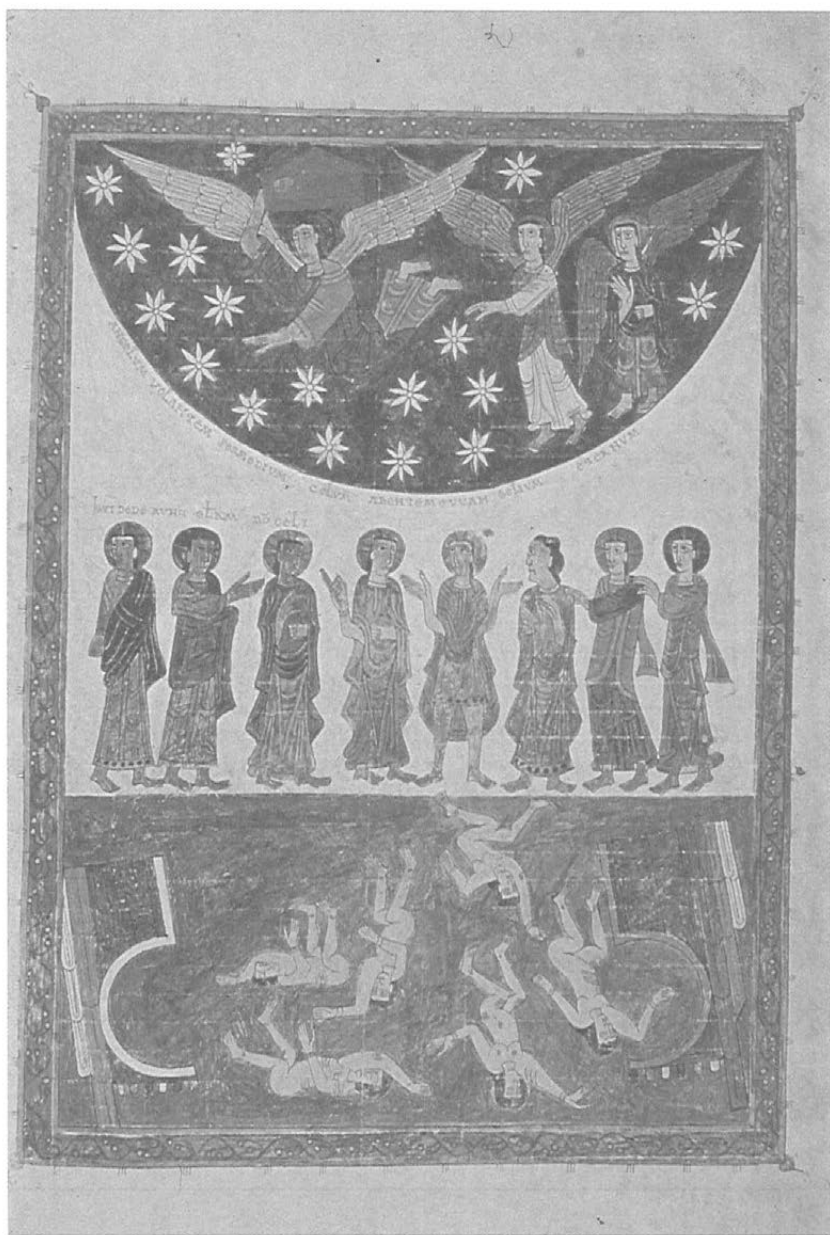


Fig. 9 Gerona Beatus, f. 192r, above: the church; in the centre band, "those who gave the church to the Lord of Heaven", and below, the destruction of Babylon.

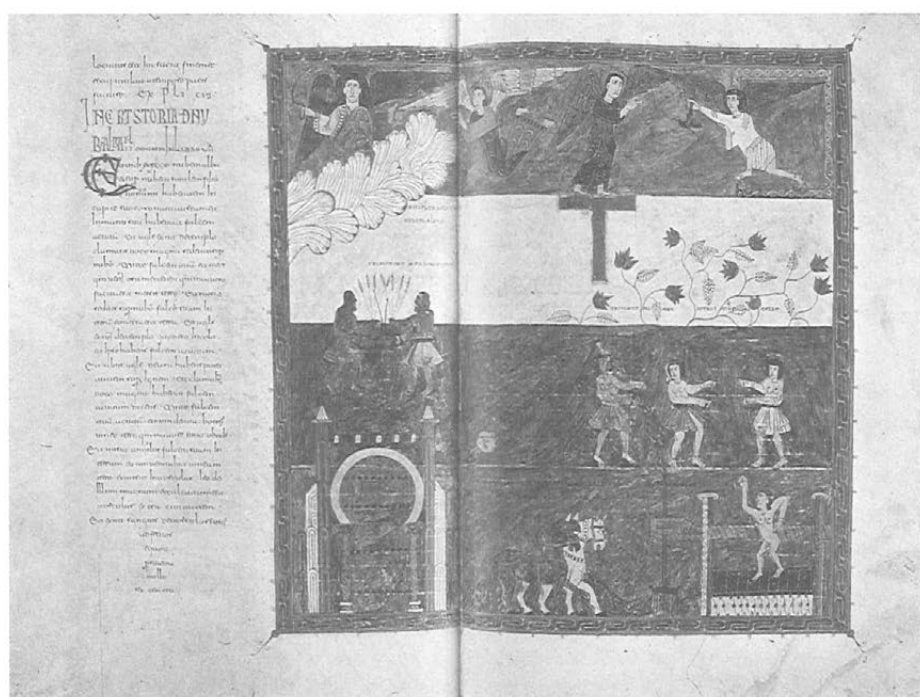


Fig. 10 Gerona Beatus, ff. 193v-194r, harvest of the earth. An angel with reaping hook leaves the temple, top right. Centre band: vintage. Below, the winepress outside the city, depicted as wall and city gate, with two horses representing, according to Beatus, *principes et rectores mundi*.



Fig. 12 Morgan Beatus, M 644, f. 193r, the seventh angel pours his vial over a tripartite city.

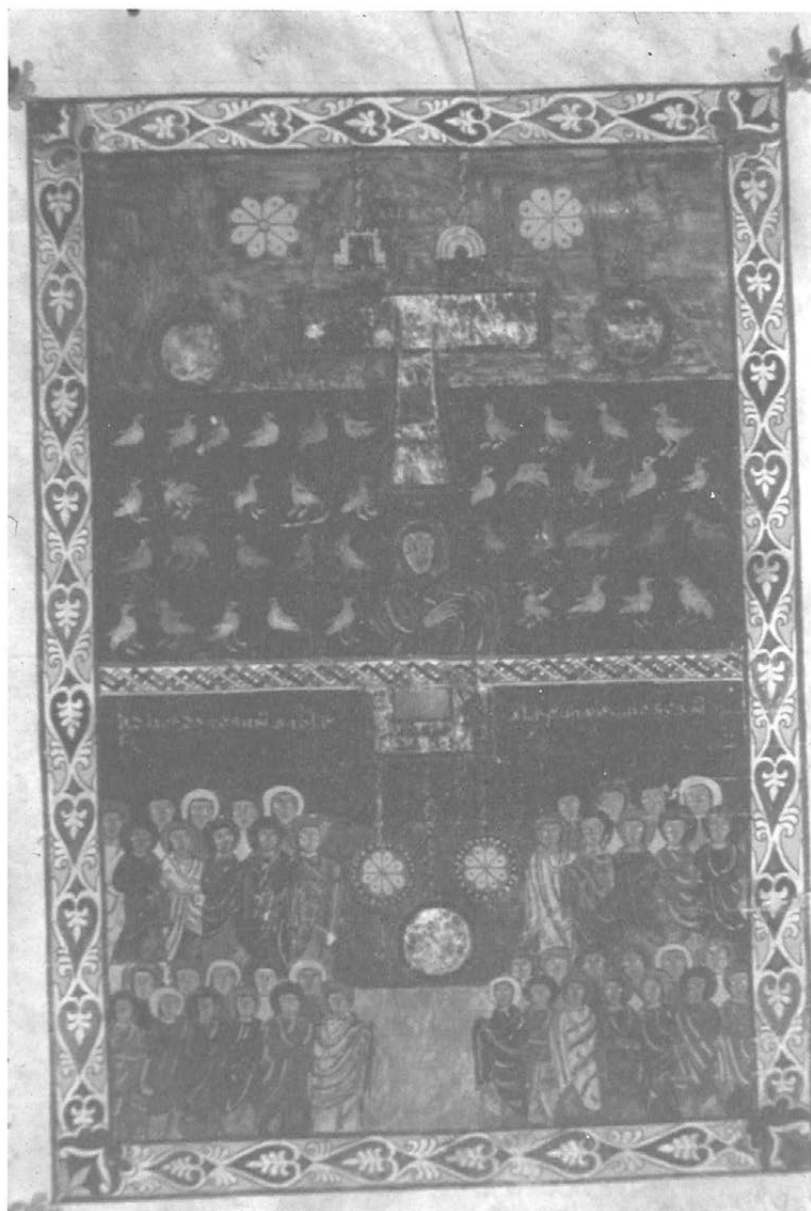


Fig. 13 Morgan Beatus, M 644, f. 109r, top: the "souls of those who were slain" (cf. Apc 6, 9) are depicted as birds beneath the altar. The legend describes the scene below: *ad hos date sunt stole albe ut requiescant*.

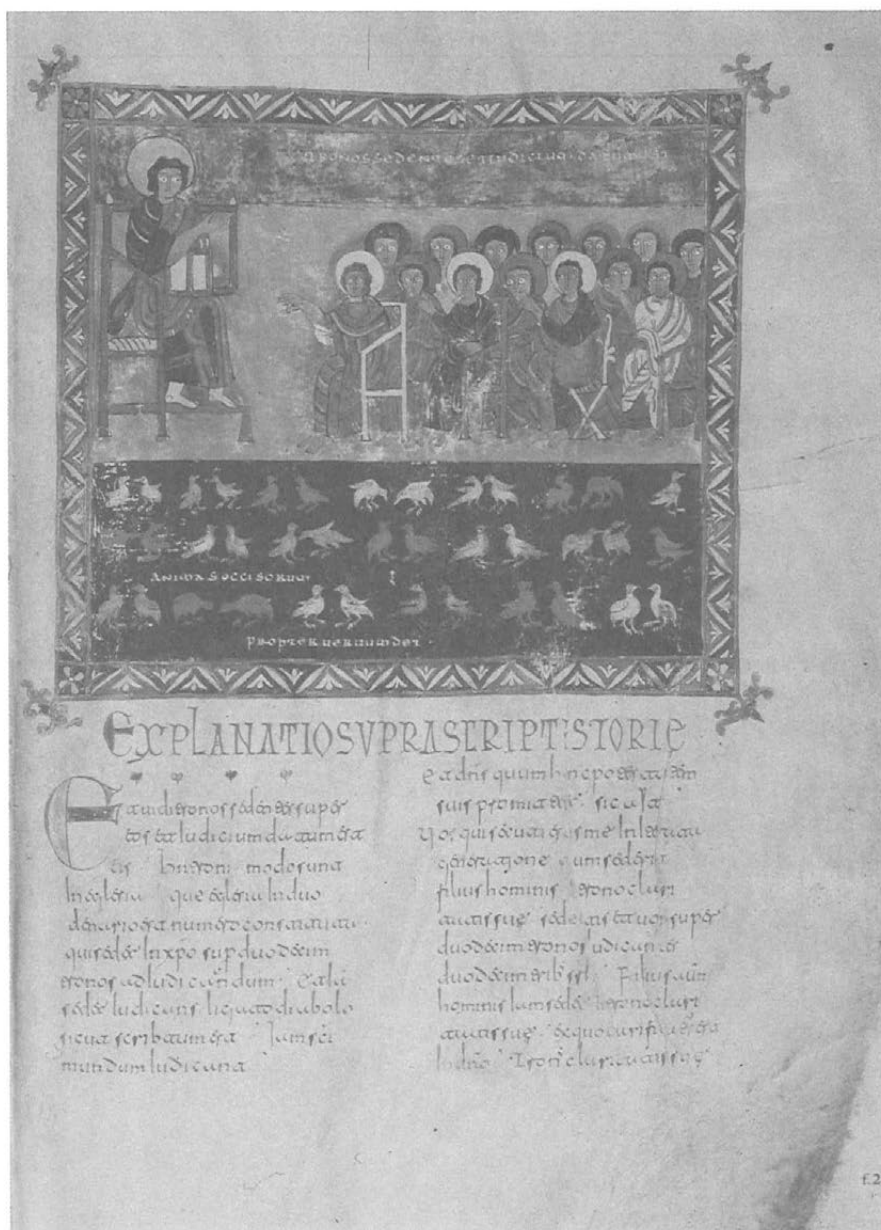


Fig. 14 Morgan Beatus, M 644, f. 214r, below according to the legend, *animas occisorum propter verbum dei* are depicted as birds; above, these same persons are described as *thronos sedentes et iudicium datum est*.



Fig. 15 Floor mosaic next to the altar of the late antique basilica of Es Fornas de Torrello, Menorca.

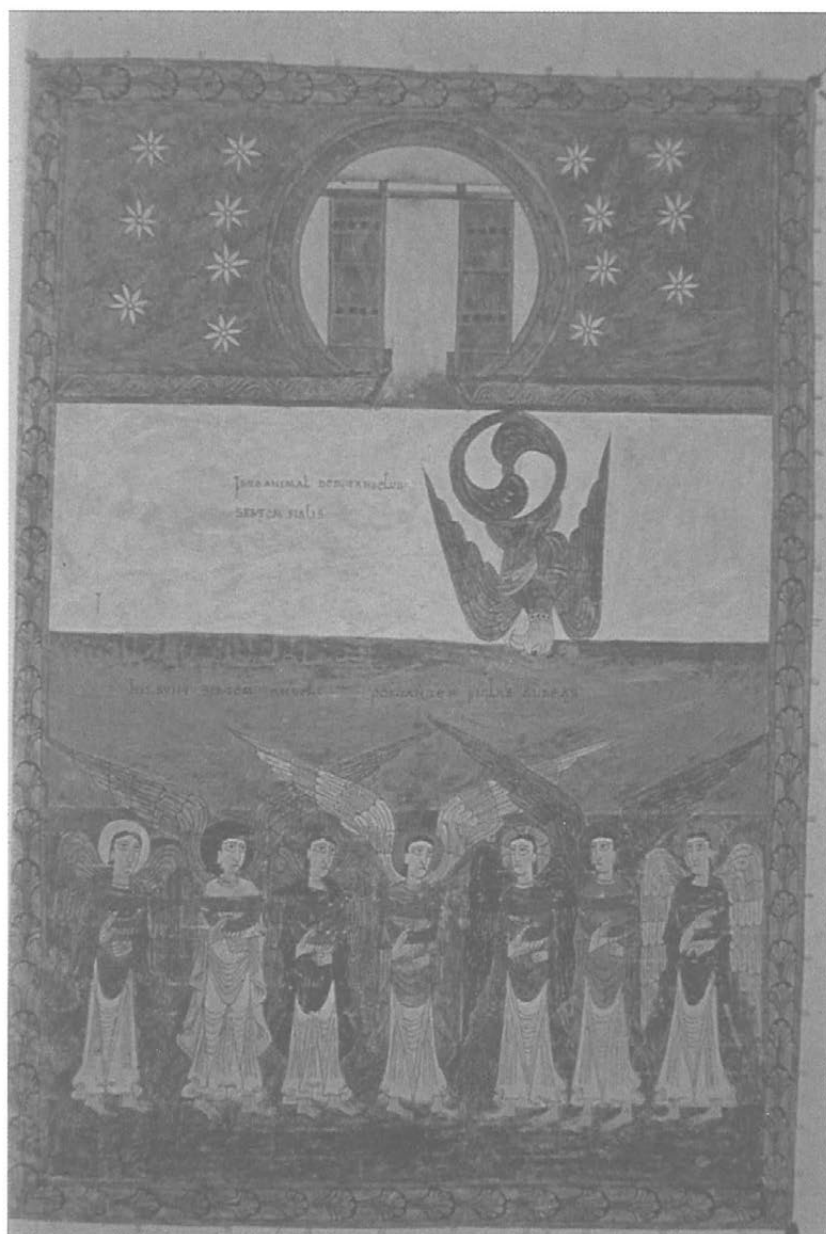


Fig. 16 Gerona Beatus, f. 198r, *storia templi aperti* (Apc 15, 5 ff.). The eagle of the evangelist John gives “golden vials of God’s wrath” to the seven angels standing below.

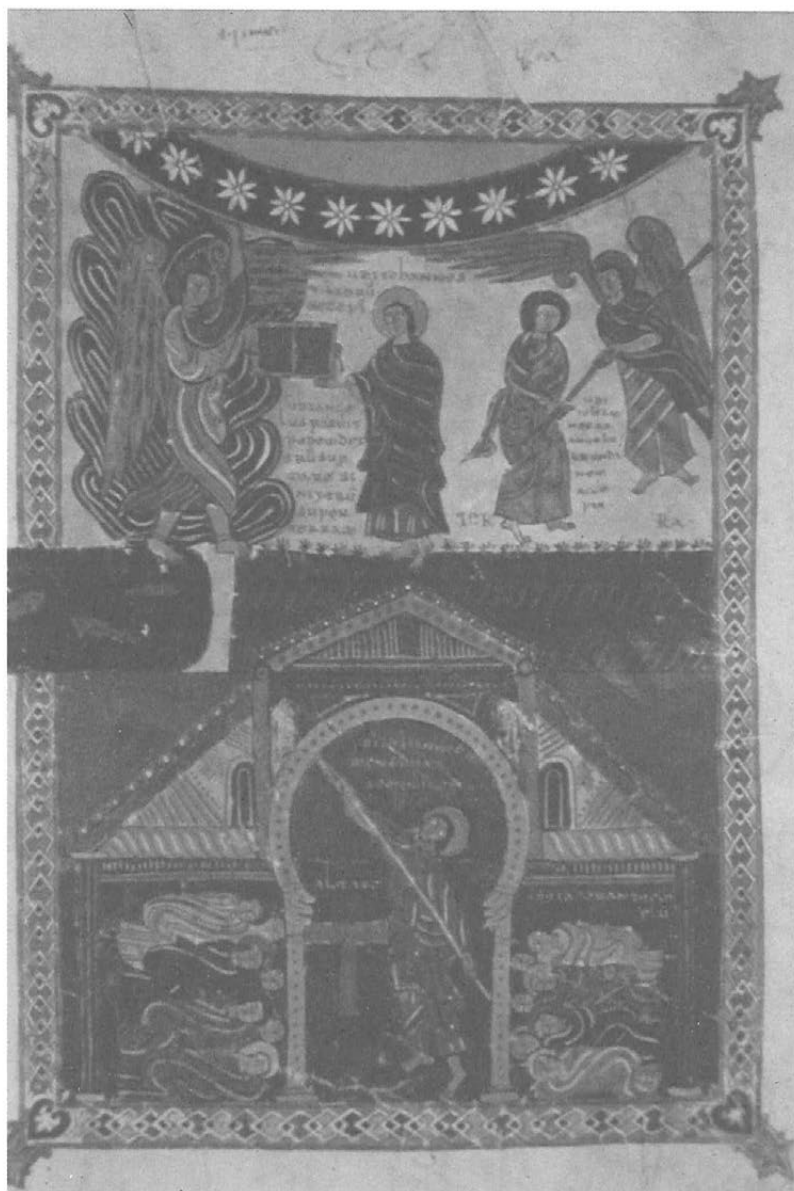


Fig. 17 Morgan Beatus M 644, f. 146r, illustrating Apocalypse 10,1-11,2. Above, John first receives from an angel the book he is to eat and then a measuring rod. Below, he uses the rod to measure the temple but not its *atrium*.

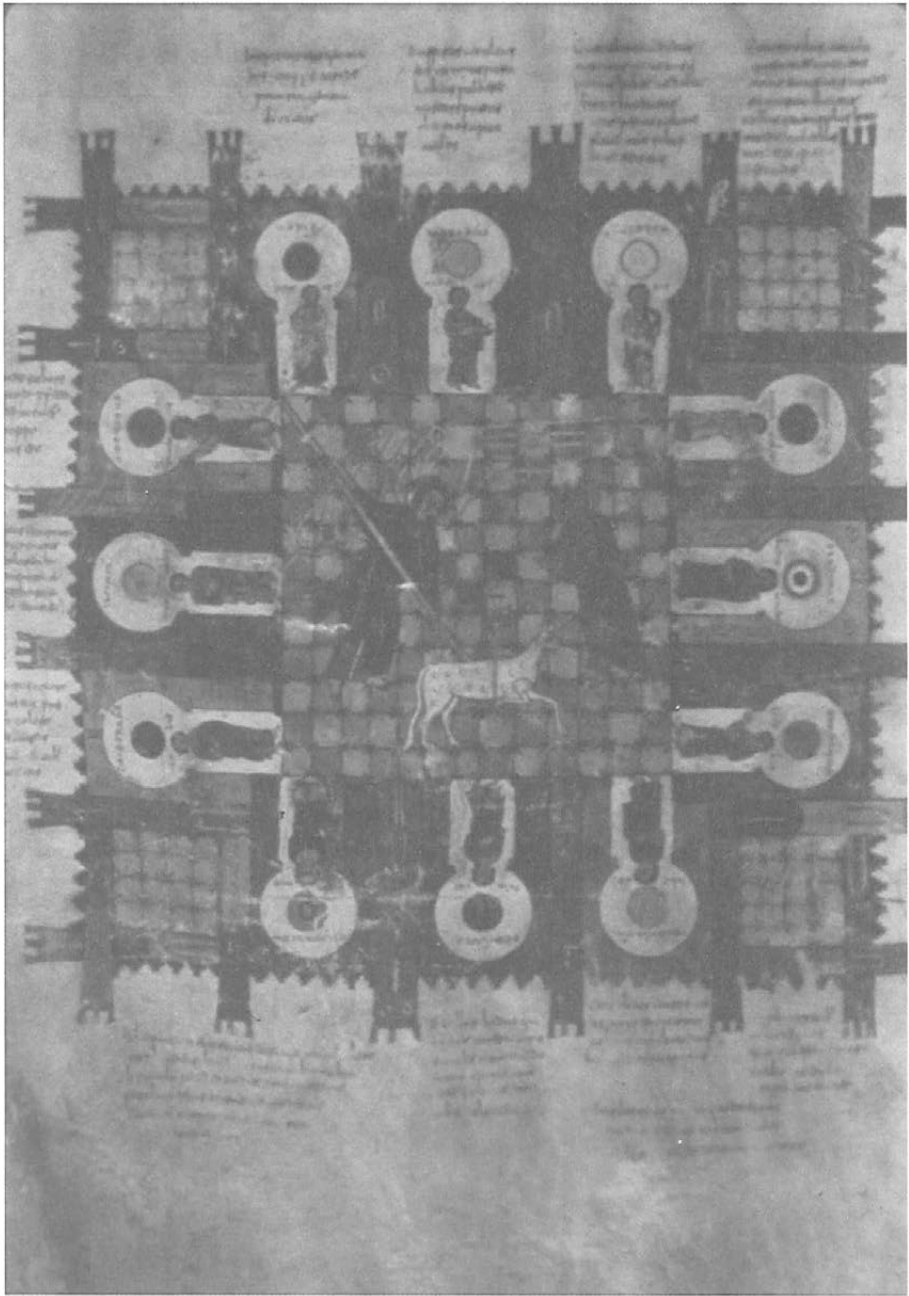


Fig. 18 Morgan Beatus M 644, f. 222v, the City of God.

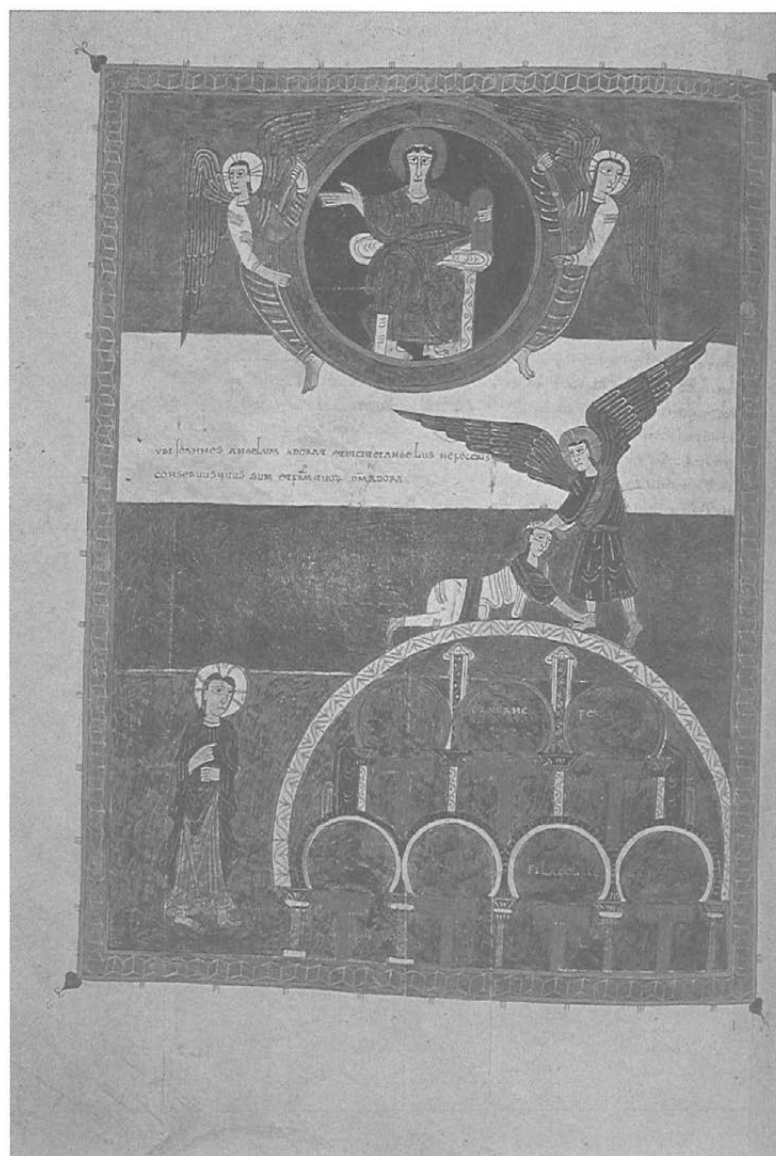


Fig. 19 Gerona Beatus f. 234v, beneath Christ enthroned in heaven, John prostrates himself before the angel and stands next to a structure of seven arches integrated within one single arch, a visual expression of the seven churches of Asia and simultaneously of the church's unity in multiplicity (cf. Figs. 4 and 5).

The Carolingian Idol: Exegetes and Idols

WILLIAM DIEBOLD

To the memory of Michael Camille¹

The Carolingian idol may seem a perverse subject for a contribution to a collection of papers on verbal and pictorial imaging of the invisible in the early Middle Ages; defining features of the medieval idol were precisely its materiality and visibility, which distinguished it from the immaterial, invisible God. But, while Carolingian writers insistently defined idols as visible, actual idols were invisible to almost all Carolingians. By the ninth century, the heart of the Carolingian kingdoms was fully Christian, which meant that pagan idols were not part of Carolingian reality.² But this did not keep the

¹ Like most medievalists of the past fifteen years, I was profoundly impressed by Michael Camille's presence and work. The title of this paper refers to his pathbreaking book, *The Gothic Idol*, a study on which it depends both methodologically and for the questions it asks. For that reason, and because this paper was originally delivered as a lecture in Utrecht, the city where I saw Michael for the last time, I am honoured to dedicate it to Michael's memory. On that last visit, we were able to look together at the Utrecht Psalter; I hope never to forget Michael's joy and excitement, so totally characteristic of him, on that wonderful occasion.

² The degree to which there were popular practices in ninth-century Europe that might be understood as idolatrous is a contentious one. There is no archaeological evidence for idols from the Carolingian heartland and no agreement on how to interpret the textual evidence. For the argument that many practices associated with Greco-Roman and Germanic paganism survived into the early Middle Ages, see V.I.J. FLINT, *The Rise of Magic in Early Medieval Europe* (Princeton, 1991); for the extreme opposite claim, that all of the evidence comprises literary topoi with no reference to early medieval reality, see D. HARMENING, *Superstitio* (Berlin, 1979).

Carolingians from being fascinated, almost obsessed, with idols. Indeed, it is likely that this paradoxical nature of the Carolingian idol, its invisible visibility, made it of such interest in the ninth century.

The subject of this paper is how the Carolingians represented idols. My premise is that the Carolingian treatment of idolatry is a kind of mirror of the Carolingian conception of images, with the forbidden idol as the reversed double of the tolerated image. But this metaphor of the mirror is only partially apt. The Carolingian discourse of idols was complex and I will try to trace two important strands. The first is the continued influence in the ninth century of authoritative texts, the Bible and the Fathers, written in contexts where idol worship was a real concern. These late antique texts came into conflict with Carolingian knowledge of Germanic pagans, whose idolatry, if it existed at all, did not accord well with that described in the anti-idol polemics of the Mediterranean authors of the Bible and the patristic texts. A second and, to my mind, more important component of the Carolingian conception of the idol was the image debate of the late eighth and early ninth centuries.³

A technique beloved of Carolingian scholars was to begin with a definition; we could do worse than to follow their practice, which introduces us both to the Carolingian terminology for idols and some of their ideas about them. The Carolingians called idols either *idola* or *simulacra*. Interestingly, unlike the English word "idol", neither Latin term was necessarily pejorative in the ninth century. Thus, Hrabanus Maurus (and, following him, Angelomus of Luxeuil) could gloss *idola* simply as "figures or images" (*figuras vel imagines*).⁴ But aside from this scholastic explanation of the term (Hrabanus's point seems to be that in certain Old Testament passages the Vulgate *idola* does not recognize the subtlety of the Hebrew), I know of no Carolingian text where *idolum* is used neutrally. This is hardly surprising, given the universal Christian condemnation of idolatry. *Simulacrum* is similar. Despite its literal meaning, "likeness" or "copy", this word almost always meant idol in Carolingian texts.⁵ Yet again, the

I tend to side more with Harmening than with Flint, but I do not believe that refereeing this dispute is crucial to the arguments of this paper.

³ This paper, which concentrates on Carolingian Biblical exegesis about idols, is part of a more complete study of the Carolingian idol that considers the full range of ninth-century representations of idolatry.

⁴ Hrabanus Maurus, *Commentariorum in Genesim libri quattuor*, ed. in: PL 107, cols. 439-670 at col. 606; Angelomus of Luxeuil, *Commentarius in Genesim*, ed. B. PEZ, reprinted in: PL 115, cols. 107-244, at col. 221.

⁵ Of approximately 150 Carolingian uses of the word known to me, in all but one case *simulacrum* means idol. The one possible exception is in Walahfrid Strabo's poem, *De imagine Tetrici*, where a passage directed to Louis the Pious criticizes the artistic patronage of his father:

schoolmen were, at least at times, not so judgmental. Haimo of Auxerre defined *simulacra* simply as “images of dead men or animals (*imagines mortuorum hominum aut animalium*)”.⁶ According to his definition, it is not the *simulacrum* itself that is the problem, but rather the attention paid to it. As Haimo put it, idolaters are “those who venerate the simulacra of dead men, or indeed images of any sort, in place of God”.⁷

The Biblical prohibition on idolatry, expressed most clearly in the Second Commandment, meant that, while *idolum* and *simulacrum* were at least etymologically neutral, the same could not be said of the third major term used in Carolingian texts about idols: *idololatria*. Even etymologically, this word was

“His golden effigies [*simulacra*] sport at the tops of columns, / To his genius I do not apply the teachings of Plato” (*Walahfridi Strabi Carmina*, ed. E. DÜMLER, *Poetae Latini aevi Carolini* (II) (Berlin, 1884: MGH PP 2), pp. 229-423, at p. 373; tr. M.W. HERREN, “The ‘De imagine Tetrici’ of Walahfrid Strabo: Edition and translation”, *The Journal of Medieval Latin* 1 (1991), pp. 118-139, at p. 135). While *De imagine Tetrici* is part of the reaction against Charlemagne by a circle around Louis the Pious, a claim that the great Charles erected idols of himself would be striking.

Also interesting in this passage, in light of my discussion below, is the reference to the *dogma Platonis*. Herren has convincingly argued that the reference is to Plato’s dictum from the *Republic*, paraphrased by Walahfrid later in the poem, that the state is happy when wise kings rule (the implication would be that Charlemagne was not a wise king). But is the Platonic critique of representation, another of the Greek philosopher’s “teachings”, also a subtext here? Cf. HERREN, “Walahfrid Strabo’s *De imagine Tetrici*: an Interpretation”, in: *Latin Culture and Medieval Germanic Europe*, ed. R. NORTH and T. HOFSTRA (Groningen, 1992), pp. 25-41 at p. 35.

⁶ [Haimo of Auxerre], *Enarratio in duodecim prophetas minores*, ed. in: PL 117, cols. 9-294, at col. 90. This commentary, printed in the edition under the name Remigius of Auxerre, is actually by Haimo (possible exceptions are the commentaries on Joel and Amos); C. JEUDY, “Remigii autissiodorensis opera (Clavis)”, *L’école carolingienne d’Auxerre de Murethach à Remi, 830-908*, ed. D. IOGNA-PRAT, C. JEUDY, and G. LOBRICHON (Paris, 1991), pp. 457-500, at p. 499.

As with all Carolingian Biblical exegesis, the originality of this passage should not be assumed, although I have found no source for it in a search of the *Patrologia Latina* and *Corpus Christianorum* databases (*Patrologia Latina Database* (Cambridge, 1992-1995) and CETEDOC, *Library of Latin Texts (CLCLT)*, 5th edn. (Turnhout, 2002)). However, as John Contreni has noted, Haimo, unlike an exegete such as Hrabanus Maurus, “defly wove his authorities together”, so that a search for a particular phrase might well not turn up a hit, even if the idea were, in substance, taken from an earlier authority (J. CONTRENI, “Haimo of Auxerre’s Commentary on Ezekiel”, in: *L’école carolingienne*, pp. 229-242 at p. 231).

Haimo’s definition of *simulacra* was not unique to him; Notker the Stammerer wrote of “*simulacra* to dead men” (*Florilegium Sangallense*, ed. O.P. CLAVADTSCHER, H. MAURER and S. SONDEREGGER (St. Gall, 1980), p. 102).

⁷ Haimo of Auxerre, *Expositionis in Apocalypsin b. Joannis libri septem*, ed. in: PL 117, cols. 937-1220, at col. 1196.

already corrupt, as Haimo made clear; after defining *idolum* he continued: “*latria* is a Greek word meaning the service which should be offered to God alone. ‘Idolator’ is made from these two words: he who offers to idols the honour and service which should only be shown to the omnipotent God”.⁸ *Idolum* could conceivably be neutral, but not in combination with *latria*. Haimo’s etymological definition of idolatry is drawn from Augustine⁹ and shows that, in their understanding of idols, as in so much else, the Carolingians were crucially dependent on the world of late antiquity. Augustine’s definition was also picked up in the dossiers of citations on the image question compiled by Agobard of Lyon and by the bishops at the 825 council of Paris.¹⁰ This link is crucial, for it indicates that Carolingian thinking about idols was sometimes directly relevant to the Carolingian theological discourse on images. While the elite Carolingian discussion of images in response to Byzantine iconoclasm and iconodulism has generally proved difficult to relate to Carolingian image practice, there is a remarkable consistency of Carolingian writing about all sorts of images, including idols.

For the Carolingians, the philological critique of idols and idolatry could lead to an ontological critique. Haimo of Auxerre, glossing 1 Cor 8, 4, started off with the same neutral tone found in Hrabanus: “*Idos* in Greek means appearance or form; hence the diminutive *idolum*, that is, a little form of some metal, or wood, or stone”. But he immediately produced a second, critical claim: “An idol is thus nothing because it seems to have the image of a man and is not a man”.¹¹ Because of its importance for Carolingian thinking about images, this ontological critique deserves attention. It was a favourite of Haimo’s. For example, glossing another passage from 1 Corinthians (1 Cor 12, 2), this one concerning “mute idols”, the Auxerre schoolman wrote: “*Simulacra* take their name from ‘pretending’ (*simulando*), because they pretend to be a man but are not a man, pretend to be a horse but are not a horse, and so forth”.¹²

⁸ Haimo of Auxerre, *In divi Pauli epistolas expositio*, ed. in: *PL* 117, cols. 359-938, at col. 561.

⁹ Augustine, *Civ. Dei*, x, 1.

¹⁰ Agobard of Lyon, *Opera omnia*, ed. L. VAN ACKER (Turnhout, 1981: *CCCM* 52), pp. 152-153; *Concilium Parisiense*, ed. A. WERMINGHOFF, *Concilia aevi Karolini [742-842]*, 2 vols. (Hannover, 1906-1908: *MGH CONC* 2.2), pp. 473-551, at pp. 501-502.

¹¹ Haimo, *In divi Pauli*, ed. in: *PL* 117, col. 549. I discuss this interesting and important text in greater detail below. I found no source for this passage in a search of the *Patrologia Latina* and *Corpus Christianorum* databases; but cf. the caveat about the nature of Haimo’s exegesis in n. 6 above.

¹² Haimo, *In divi Pauli*, ed. in: *PL* 117, col. 575. While the derivation of *simulacrum* from *simulare* has an early Christian source (Jerome’s commentary on the Pauline epistles, ed. in: *PL* 30, col. 863), a search of the *Patrologia Latina* and *Corpus Christianorum* databases found no

This literal critique of representation has a long history in the West as part of a tradition that stretches from Plato's *Republic* to René Magritte's painting *Ceci n'est pas une pipe*.¹³

The implications of Haimo's position would have appalled many of his Byzantine contemporaries. Eastern iconoclasm depended on the existence of a significant relationship between an image and what it represented, a relationship that for Haimo was purely nominal and therefore insignificant. To put it a different fashion: Haimo's attitude is a strictly Platonic one, in which the gap separating an idea from its physical manifestation is immense, as is the gap between that physical manifestation and a representation of it (Plato's famous example distinguished the ideal form of the bed, an actual bed made by a craftsman, and a painting of a bed; for Plato, this last was at third hand from the idea). The Byzantines, on the other hand, favoured the Neoplatonic modifications that blurred the original Platonic distinctions; for them, there was a real relationship between image and prototype, even if that relationship was not easy to define.

We can appreciate Haimo's bind. He was glossing an authoritative text, Paul's epistles, where the apostle had claimed: "we know that an idol is nothing in the world" (1 Cor 8, 4). Inconveniently, Paul had not explained why idols were nothing in the world and so it fell to his commentators to explain his meaning. Haimo, perhaps influenced by Christian Platonists such as Augustine, had argued that idols, because they resembled things but were not those things, were themselves nothing. While this Platonic position has considerable philosophical strength, it also had a major drawback: it was not able to distinguish between idols and images; it was a general critique of mimetic representation as deception, rather than an explanation of why idols are unacceptable. Thus, a

other source for this passage; but cf. the caveat about the nature of Haimo's exegesis in n. 6 above.

Elsewhere in his Epistles commentary, Haimo made a similar point. After giving the definition for idol I have cited, Haimo wrote: "An idol is thus nothing because it seems to have the image of a man and is not a man; [it seems] to have the image of a beast, but is not a beast; seems to have ears, eyes, nostrils, and mouth, but is nothing because it does not see, hear, smell, or speak. It is said to be a man, but it is not a man; it is said to be God, but it is not God; thus, it is nothing, because it is not what it is said to be" (PL 117, col. 549). This passage is paraphrased elsewhere by Haimo as a gloss of 1 Cor 10, 19; there he adds "it is said to be Hercules, but it is not Hercules" (PL 117, col. 565).

¹³ Haimo was not the only ninth-century thinker to make this ontological critique; Paschasius Radbertus's question "What divine power (*numinis*) can [simulacra] have, which retain nothing of life except the appearance?" is motivated by a similar worry about the ability of representations to provide reliable information; *De passione SS. Rufini et Valerii*, ed. J. SIRMOND, reprinted in: PL 120, cols. 1489-1508, at col. 1502.

sceptic about images such as Theodulf of Orléans, writing in the *Opus Caroli regis* (also known as the *Libri Carolini*) not about idols but about pictures, anticipated Haimo's text almost word for word:

Truth persevering always pure and undefiled is one. Images, however, by the will of the artist seem to do many things, while they do nothing. For, since they seem to be men when they are not, to fight when they do not fight, to speak when they do not speak, to hear when they do not hear, to see when they do not see, to beckon when they do not beckon, to touch when they do not touch and other things like this, it is clear that they are artist's fictions and not the truth of which it is said "And the truth will make you free". ... The principal difference between a true and a painted man is that one is true and the other false, and they have nothing in common except the name.¹⁴

Because Theodulf had an especially restrictive notion of the value of images, he could be satisfied with a radical critique of representation. Haimo was less well able to tolerate a general reduction to nothing not just of idols but of all images. Thus, he immediately modified his position. Directly after writing that idols were nothing because they were not the things they represented, he changed the terms of his critique and said that "Idols are also nothing" because artists can represent things that God did not make. The example Haimo chose was a figure with four animals' heads, a snake's body, and horses' feet. He concluded that "this is nothing, because God did not make such a creation".¹⁵ I will discuss this rich passage more fully at the end of this paper, but want to point out here that Haimo is no longer taking his radical position against representation. He is no longer concerned that paintings of pipes are not actually pipes; rather, he is using another idea with classical roots (this time in Horace's *Ars poetica*): painters have the power to represent things that do not exist. For Horace and for a powerful tradition following him, this was a proof of the power of the painter's fantasy and imagination, evidence that Plato's literal critique of mimesis did not rule out the possibility of art.

Haimo criticized idols both because they are representations (and so *per se* not real) and because they sometimes are not representations, in that they do not reproduce the appearance of things actually existing in the world. Although he was one of the most sophisticated of all Carolingian thinkers, Haimo's position on idols is philosophically inconsistent, simultaneously Platonic and anti-

¹⁴ *Opus Caroli regis contra synodum (Libri Carolini)*, ed. A. FREEMAN (Hannover, 1998: MGH CONC 2, Supplementum 1), pp. 116-117, cited in the translation from C. DAVIS-WEYER, *Early Medieval Art, 300-1150* (New York, 1971), p. 100.

¹⁵ Haimo, *In divi Pauli*, ed. in: PL 117, col. 550.

Platonic. I will continue to use Haimo as a touchstone precisely because his very inconsistency is a sign of the Carolingian consternation in the face of idols, an indication of just how problematic and worrisome idols were in the ninth century. Too much was at stake not to pursue every refutation of idols, even if these refutations were not always consistent.

At least one Carolingian schoolman could have pointed out to Haimo the logical inconsistency of his writing. Hrabanus Maurus, addressing precisely the same situation as Haimo, came to a different conclusion. Commenting on Exodus (Ex 20, 4, the Second Commandment's prohibition on representational images: "You shall not make for yourself an idol nor any likeness of those things which are in heaven or which are in earth"), Hrabanus quoted from the *Homily on Exodus* of the early Christian theologian Origen:

It is one thing to make an idol, another a likeness. ... If someone with gold or silver or wood or stone should make the form of any four-footed animal or serpent or bird and sets it up to be adored, he has made not an idol, but a likeness, and even if he set up a painting for this purpose he is said no less to have made a likeness. Someone makes an idol when he makes what does not exist. (For according to the Apostle's teaching "An idol is nothing" (1 Cor 8, 4)). But what is that which is not? An image which no eye has seen, but which the spirit has imagined. For example, if you imagine a dog's or a ram's head on human limbs, or if you put two faces on one man or join a man's torso to the lower parts of a horse or a fish. He who makes these things and things like them does not make a likeness, but an idol. For he makes what is not, nor is there anything like it. And, therefore, knowing these things the Apostle says, "An idol is nothing in the world", for no form is adopted from existing things but that which the idle and curious mind itself perceived in itself. ...¹⁶

While arguments such as Origen's, steeped in the philosophical language and sophistication of the Greco-Roman world, might have aided Haimo with his conundrums, they did little to help the Carolingians address the issue of idolatry as it confronted them. Applied to Greco-Roman paganism, Origen's definition worked well to exclude much of what Christians regarded as idols (e.g., depictions of Anubis, Janus, or a centaur), while permitting other representational images (what Origen calls "likenesses"). But to the degree Carolin-

¹⁶ Hrabanus Maurus, *Commentariorum in Exodum libri quattuor*, ed. in: PL 108, cols. 9-246, at col. 95; cited from the translation of R.E. HEINE, *Origen: Homilies on Genesis and Exodus* (Washington, DC, 1981), pp. 320-322, with some passages cited from the translation in D. GANZ, "Pando quod Ignoro": In search of Carolingian artistic experience", in: *Intellectual Life in the Middle Ages: Essays Presented to Margaret Gibson*, ed. L. SMITH and B. WARD (London, 1992), pp. 28-29.

gian writers were actually concerned about contemporary idols, Origen's text was basically useless, for the idols of Germanic paganism were neither likenesses of things in the world nor fantasies of artists, but the things of nature themselves. What we know of "idols" such as the Irminsul or the oak of Geismar suggests that they were neither Origen's idols nor his likenesses, but simply trees. Whatever its interest as a philosophical statement on images,¹⁷ Origen's ideas were too far removed from Carolingian concerns to be of much value to ninth-century thinkers; thus, Hrabanus's citation of him remains unique and Origen's distinction was not influential in the Carolingian discourse on images or idols. For example, Remigius, Haimo's successor as master of the school at Auxerre, seems oblivious to Origen's distinction and thus more typically Carolingian when he gave this straightforward gloss on Ps 134, 15: "The Lord is deservedly praised, not the 'idols of the gentiles', which are simply the likenesses of things (*similitudines rerum*) ...".¹⁸

It was not just Haimo and Remigius who ignored Origen's subtlety and criticized idols because they were representations. This critique of the representational gap was no peculiarity of the school of Auxerre; rather, it was a basic Carolingian claim. Even Hrabanus Maurus, who knew Origen's exegesis, also made the less detailed and less philosophically scrupulous argument that representations were simply lies. For example, glossing Dt 16, 21-22, an Old Testament passage forbidding the planting of trees near God's altar and the making of statues, Hrabanus wrote:

With these two precepts he cuts off the opportunity for idolatry, which people are accustomed to practice by making simulacra for themselves and adoring idols in shrines and groves. ... He does not permit any fiction of falsity and error (*fictio falsitatis atque erroris*) to be associated with the truth of the catholic faith.¹⁹

¹⁷ For a careful analysis of the origins and implications of Origen's ideas, see C. GINZBURG, "Idols and likenesses: Origen, *Homilies on Exodus* VIII. 3, and its reception", in: *Sight & Insight: Essays in Art and Culture in Honour of E.H. Gombrich at 85*, ed. J. ONIANS (London, 1994), pp. 55-72 (also available in a revised Italian version: "Idoli e immagini: Un passo di Origene e la sua fortuna", in: C. GINZBURG, *Occhiacci di legno* (Milan, 1998), pp. 118-135).

¹⁸ Remigius of Auxerre, *Enarrationum in Psalmos liber unus*, ed. in: *PL* 131, cols. 133-844, at col. 795. Although there is a possibility that this commentary is not original to Remigius, its source is neither Augustine's nor Cassiodorus' commentary on the psalms. Nor did I find a source for it in the *Corpus Christianorum* or *Patrologia Latina* databases.

¹⁹ Hrabanus Maurus, *Enarratio super Deuteronomium*, ed. in: *PL* 108, cols. 839-998, at col. 901.

The phrase *fictio falsitatis atque erroris* is an acknowledgment of the representational gap.

This kind of rhetorical incoherence, where Hrabanus adopts Origen's position in one commentary and jettisons it in another or Haimo simultaneously accepts and rejects the claim that idols are nothing, is a sign of a discourse in crisis. Proliferation of arguments is another sign of the same thing. We have seen this already in Hrabanus; Haimo is an even finer case study. In a move that separates him from the traditional Western critique of representation and from the dismissal of idols as fantasy, Haimo argued that not only is an idol nothing, but that:

its adorers and worshippers and those who consecrate food to it are nothing, because their worship and consecration make them nothing. From this follows that men worshipping idols are nothing because every creature who does not cling to him whom he holds to be eternal is nothing, just as the prophet said: "All nations" who worship idols "are as if they had no being at all and are counted to him as nothing and vanity" (Is 40, 17).²⁰

For Haimo, although idols are nothing, they also have the power to negate their beholder. For the Carolingian theory of art, the viewer's reception of the image did not loom as large as it does in modern thinking. Since Carolingian beholders already were, so to speak, as nothing, it is tellingly surprising that Haimo bothered to negate them. But idols were too important, too problematic, for Haimo to leave any stone unturned. Another example of the same rhetorical excess is Haimo's tendentious paraphrase of the passage from Isaiah which he used to clinch his argument. The Vulgate text reads "All nations (*gentes*) are before him as if they had no being at all" (the point being that God's greatness makes everything else insignificant); Haimo, with his Carolingian fear of idols/images, needed to misread the prophet and to insert the phrase *idola colentes* after *gentes* in order to make the logic of his claim clear. According to Haimo, Isaiah wrote that all nations *who worship idols* are as nothing.²¹

After having thoroughly deconstructed idols and their viewers, one would not have thought there was much left. But Haimo, with the excess born of uncertainty, did still more. Although a number of Old and New Testament passages insisted on the muteness of idols, one had to be sure. After quoting Ps 134, 15 and I Cor 12, 2, two of the scriptural proofs of an idol's muteness, Hai-

²⁰ Haimo, *In divi Pauli*, ed. in: PL 117, cols. 549-550.

²¹ Haimo could have, but did not, draw upon Isaiah for a related, but more limited point, for the prophet had also written: "The makers of idols are all of them nothing" (Is 44, 9).

mo rather oddly added "If a word is heard from idols, it is to be ascribed to the deception of demons and not to the mind of the simulacra".²²

In some respects, Carolingian idols were the antitheses of images; in others, however, they were their double. This meant that the Carolingian discourse on idols could neither be simply the negation of the discourse on images nor its repetition. We have seen examples of places where talk about idols and talk about images overlapped. Equally telling are places where it did not. In his epistle to the Romans, Paul criticized the pagans in Rome, who "worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator" (Rm 1, 25). This powerful but terse charge, with its wordplay and alliteration ("*et coluerunt creaturae potius quam creatori*"), had all the makings of an aphorism; no surprise, then, that it became one of the most often invoked phrases in the Western Christian debate on images, including the Carolingian.²³ It might seem that Paul's distinction between creator and created would have been equally apposite for the attack on idolatry, yet I know of only one instance where it was used in a Carolingian text to criticize idolatry, an 864 letter of Pope Nicholas I to Horic, king of the Danes, in which Nicholas thanked Horic for his gifts, but exhorted him to desist from idol worship:

Cease the worship of idols and stop serving demons! "For all the gods of the Gentiles are devils" says the psalmist, "but the Lord made the heavens" (Ps 95, 5). Thus, it is he who made things, not he who was made, the creator and not the creature, who is to be worshipped. Behold your idols made by hand; they are deaf, mute, and blind. I ask that you consider carefully what help they can bring you; they can offer you no comfort, because they are without sense.²⁴

This argument probably did not find favour as a Carolingian criticism of idolatry in part because, if idols were truly nothing, then their status as something created by God was a matter of considerable philosophical and theological debate. Paul's distinction might be suitable for a letter from the pope to a recent convert to Christianity, but it seems to have been too problematic for use in the professional discussions of the Carolingian scholars.

²² Haimo, *In divi Pauli*, ed. in: *PL* 117, col. 575.

²³ E.g., *Opus Caroli*, p. 420; Agobard, *Opera*, pp. 174, 177; Claudius of Turin, *Epistolae*, ed. E. DÜMMLER in: *Epistulae Karolini aevi (III)*, ed. E. DÜMMLER et al. (Berlin, 1895: *MGH EPP* 4), pp. 586-613, at pp. 610-611; Dungal, *Responsa contra peversas Claudii Taurinensis episcopi sententias*, ed. in: *PL* 105, cols. 465-530, at col. 471; Jonas of Orléans, *De cultu imaginum libri tres*, ed. in: *PL* 106, cols. 305-388, at cols. 322, 323, 329-330.

²⁴ Nicholas I, *Epistolae*, ed. E. PERELS in: *Epistolae Karolini aevi (IV)*, ed. E. DÜMMLER, E. PERELS et al. (Berlin, 1902-1925: *MGH EPP* 6), pp. 257-690, at p. 294.

To this point in my presentation of some aspects of the Carolingian theological discourse on idolatry, I have concentrated on texts that have particular bearing on the question of images. But for Carolingian theologians, idolatry could signify various things. Despite the etymological roots of *idolum* in the language of images, an important spur to a metaphorical Christian understanding of idolatry was given by the apostle Paul, who wrote in Colossians (Col 3, 5) of "covetousness, which is the service of idols". Following Paul's authoritative lead, some Carolingian writers, almost exclusively exegetes, also took idolatry figuratively. For example Agobard, making reference to Paul, wrote that all the Old Testament references to idols and idolatry "signify all the errors in the new people, in the age of grace".²⁵ To the degree that Carolingian exegesis claims that idolatry did not have any relationship to images, it is of less direct interest to art historians than are the places where there is a discernible relationship between idolatry and image. What is striking, however, is the degree to which the Carolingians tended to bring idolatry back to the concrete case of misuse of images. Paul had pointed a way beyond the literal etymology of idolatry but, while he was sometimes followed, he often was not. This was not because the Carolingians were in general overly concrete thinkers, but rather because the dangers of idolatry for them were so great that it was not necessary to understand it figuratively; understood literally, idolatry was already a big enough problem.

There are two major strands of metaphorical exegesis of idols: one, following Paul, connected idolatry to avarice, understood metaphorically as the service to the wrong thing or people;²⁶ the other regarded it as a figure for error in general, and heresy in particular.²⁷ The passage from Agobard quoted above

²⁵ Agobard, *Opera*, p. 317; for the same idea elsewhere in Agobard's writing see *Libri duo pro filiis et contra Iudith uxorem Ludovici Pii*, ed. G. WAITZ in: *Supplementa tomorum I-XII, pars III*, ed. G. WAITZ et al., 2 vols. (Berlin, 1887-1888: MGH SS 15), 1, pp. 275-279, at p. 278.

²⁶ For examples of the association of idolatry and avarice in Carolingian exegesis see Hrabanus Maurus, *Expositionum in Leviticum libri septem*, ed. in: PL 108, cols. 245-586, at cols. 444 and 564, a quotation from the fifth-century Greek commentary of Hesychius of Jerusalem (translated into Latin in the sixth century by Jerome; for Hesychius's text, see PG 93, cols. 1021, 1152); and Walafrid Strabo, *Epitome commentariorum Rabani in Leviticum*, ed. in: PL 114, cols. 795-850, at col. 846.

²⁷ For examples of the association of idolatry and error, especially heresy, in Carolingian writing see Hrabanus Maurus, *Commentaria in libros Machabaeorum*, ed. in: PL 109, cols. 1125-1256, at col. 1144; ID., *Enarratio super Deuteronomium*, ed. in: PL 108, cols. 901, 949-950; ID., *Commentaria in libros II Paralipomenon*, ed. in: PL 109, cols. 279-540, at col. 516; ID., *Expositionis super Ieremiam prophetam libri viginti*, ed. in: PL 111, cols. 793-1272, at col. 1058, quoting from Jerome (for Jerome's text see Hieronymus, *In Ieremiam libri VI*, ed. S. REITER (Turnhout, 1960: CCSL 74, p. 343); ID., *De universo*, ed. in: PL 111, cols. 9-614, at cols. 566-567;

combines both strains. In both cases, while some Carolingian exegetes followed the Biblical text away from images, others tried to tie things back to the literal question of the forbidden use of images. Haimo, for example tried to make sense of the connection he found in his sources by writing: "Each of the heretics has his gods, and they make and place a sculpture or casting of almost as many as there are".²⁸ Haimo seems to imagine here that the heretics are literally setting up images of the gods in whom they mistakenly believe and that the chief manifestation of their heresy is idolatry. Hrabanus Maurus did not take things quite as literally when he wrote, "we can also see idols depicted on the walls of our temples when we succumb to all the vices, when we paint in our heart diverse images, that is, the recognition of sins",²⁹ but, as with Haimo, the Carolingian writer, faced with a possible metaphorical understanding of idolatry, again brought things back to the world of concrete images, the world of cast sculpture and painted walls. Also interesting is that in each case the Carolingian exegete is quoting from Jerome. Jerome was no friend of images, although his attack on them was typically on grounds of excess luxury rather than because of their status as representations. Still, the Carolingians found in the late antique father of the church a kindred spirit in their criticisms of idols and, by extension, images.

If some Carolingian exegetes had to stretch to take the association of idolatry and heresy literally, they found Paul's equation of avarice and idolatry, which appears twice in the Epistles, even more puzzling. Its double Pauline sanction meant that it had to be taken seriously, but the ninth-century writers had trouble construing it. Hrabanus Maurus, for example cited from Jerome's commentary on Ephesians:

Sedulius Scottus, *Collectaneum miscellaneum*, ed. D. SIMPSON, (Turnhout, 1988: CCCM 67, p. 35 (Simpson could not identify the source of this passage, but virtually nothing in the *Collectaneum* is a Carolingian original); Haimo, *Enarratio*, ed. in: PL 117, cols. 117, 172, 187, and 267 (the last two passages paraphrase Jerome's commentary in Hieronymus, *Commentarii in prophetas minores*, ed. M. ADRIAEN (Turnhout, 1964: CCSL 76A), pp. 614, 872); *Vita Vedasti episcopi Atrebatensis II*, ed. B. KRUSCH, *Passiones vitaeque sanctorum aevi Merovingici et antiquiorum aliquot (I)* (Hannover, 1896: MGH SRM 3), pp. 414-427, at p. 417; and Hincmar, *Collectio de una et non trina deitate*, ed. in: PL 125, cols. 473-618, at cols. 479-480 (cited in K.F. MORRISON, "Unum ex multis": Hincmar of Rheims' medical and aesthetic rationales for unification", in: *Nascita dell'Europa ed Europa carolingia: un'equazione da verificare* (Spoleto, 1981: *Atti delle Settimane di Studio del Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo* 27), 2, p. 606).

²⁸ Haimo, *Enarratio*, ed. in: PL 117, col. 80; Haimo here is quoting from Jerome (Hieronymus, *Commentarii in prophetas minores*, ed. ADRIAEN, p. 121).

²⁹ Hrabanus Maurus, *Commentariorum in Ezechielem libri viginti*, ed. in: PL 110, cols. 493-1084, at col. 623; Hrabanus here is quoting from Jerome (Hieronymus, *Commentariorum in Daniele libri III*, ed. F. GLORIE (Turnhout, 1964: CCSL 75), p. 96).

if we call "avaricious" a man who wants to have money through legal and illegal means and delights in a full purse, he is an idolator in that he worships the sculpture of that coin and he venerates carved idols in them.³⁰

Jerome, with his predilection for understanding idolatry literally as the misuse of images, was again a congenial model for the Carolingians. And, in general, early Christian ideas about the misuse of images were avidly picked up in the ninth century. Thus, Sedulius Scottus, glossing the parallel passage in Colossians (Col 3, 5) which equated idolatry with avarice, quoted from John Cassian, who condemned those who "in place of God cherish the images of men impressed in gold".³¹ Sometimes, however, the Carolingians dealt with the problematic Pauline passages not by citing the Fathers, but in their own words. But the argument was the same. Thus, Haimo wrote:

Rightly is avarice compared to idolatry, because we immoderately are slaves to the metals of gold and silver, from which idols are made, and when they make coins in which there are images of the emperors, they venerate gold and silver in the place of God because they are slaves to riches.³²

One of the burdens of my argument has been that the Carolingian discourse of idols was in conflict. The sources are not in agreement. I see this as a sign of a basic Carolingian conflict regarding idols and as a byproduct of the deep Carolingian conflict about images. While the Carolingians had an orthodox theology of images (neither iconoclasm nor iconolatry were to be allowed; pictures were to serve primarily as instruction), these guidelines were so few and so general that it was difficult to know what to think about images. It was perhaps even more difficult for the Carolingians to know what to think about idols and, in particular, what distinguished a clearly forbidden idol from a clearly permitted image. I close with the most striking evidence of that confusion: a description by a Carolingian churchman of an idol that manages to sound very much indeed like a Carolingian image.

³⁰ Hrabanus Maurus, *Enarrationum in epistolas*, ed. in: PL 112, col. 448; Jerome's commentary is edited in: PL 26, col. 554. My translation follows Jerome's text, which reads *idola* for *idololatria*, rather than the edition of Hrabanus in PL.

³¹ Sedulius Scottus, *Collectanea in omnes B. Pauli epistolas*, ed. in: PL 103, cols. 9-270, at col. 228; Cassian's text is edited in: PL 49, col. 296.

³² Haimo, *In divi Pauli*, ed. in: PL 117, col. 725; this gloss was repeated by Haimo in his exegesis of the parallel passage Col 3, 5, ed. in: PL 117, col. 760. This text seems to be original to Haimo; at least a search of the *Corpus Christianorum* and *Patrologia Latina* databases did not turn it up (but cf. once more the caveat about the nature of Haimo's exegesis in n. 6 above).

Earlier, I discussed Haimo of Auxerre's gloss on 1 Cor 8, 4, Paul's claim that idols are "nothing in the world". Haimo first interpreted this to mean that images are not identical to what they represent. But he also added a second argument:

Idols are also nothing for this reason: a man makes a form with the head of man in one part, the head of a cow in another, the head of a lion in a third, the head of an eagle in the fourth, the rest with a snake-like body and horse's feet. This is nothing, because God did not make such a creature.³³

As I noted earlier, the basic charge here is an old one: that painters can use their powers of fantasy and imagination to depict something that God did not make. Depending on the status of the painter and, more generally, the status of fantasy and imagination in a given period, this ability was either praised or criticized.³⁴ In the Middle Ages, it was generally attacked; painters were not supposed to innovate and they were not to usurp God's creative powers. But what is astounding here are not the terms of Haimo's critique, which are familiar enough, but rather his example of condemned fantasy: a figure with four heads, those of a man, a lion, a cow and an eagle; with the body of a snake; and with the feet of a horse. Haimo may be right that God did not make such a creature, but medieval Christian artists, illustrating God's word, did (Figs. 1-2). For Haimo has more or less described a tetramorph; these winged creatures, seen by Ezekiel in his vision of the heavenly throne, had the heads of the same four animals mentioned by Haimo: man, cow, lion, and eagle. Because of the influence of Ezekiel's vision on the New Testament book of Revelations and, especially, because the four creatures described by the prophet were early on associated with the four evangelists, the frankly bizarre Ezekielian tetramorph was often represented in medieval art. Tetramorphs are found in such canonical Carolingian manuscripts as the Drogo Sacramentary (Fig. 1) and the San Paolo Bible (Fig. 2), where they flank Ezekiel's vision of God in majesty in the frontispiece to the prophets. Tetramorphs may be odd, but they are certainly not idols in the common medieval understanding of that term.

Admittedly, Haimo's description does not correspond perfectly to the Ezekielian tetramorph, which do not have the body of a snake or the feet of a horse.

³³ Haimo, *In divi Pauli*, ed. in: *PL* 117, col. 550; a search of the *Corpus Christianorum* and *Patrologia Latina* databases found no source for this passage but, as noted above (n. 6), the nature of Haimo's exegetical practice does not make him an especially good target for such searches.

³⁴ See the studies collected under the title *Phantasia-imaginatio*, ed. M. FATTORI and M. BIANCHI (Rome, 1988: *Colloquio internazionale del Lessico intellettuale europeo* 5).

Typically, as in the Drogo Sacramentary, tetramorphs were represented with a human body. More unusually, as in the San Paolo Bible, they have the body of one of the four beasts (in the San Paolo manuscript there are four tetramorphs, one with the body of each of the four creatures). This means that there are depictions of tetramorphs with hooves. While these are meant to be the hooves of a cow, cows' hooves are not so different from horses' hooves and so Haimo, either wilfully or out of ignorance, could have been describing such a figure when he wrote of an idol that it had a "horse's feet". And, while I know of no tetramorph literally depicted with a snake's body, the sixth and final distinguishing feature of Haimo's idol, the tetramorph's wings are often shown wrapped around its body; the manner in which the feathers in the wings are represented, as a series of nested semi-circles, could well recall the scales of a snake.³⁵ So Haimo's model idol could well be the description of a perfectly orthodox, even typical, piece of Carolingian art.

The Carolingian confusion about idols, caused by the Carolingian crisis of the image, could not find a more powerful or poignant expression. Haimo's struggle to define the tetramorph as an idol is ironic because, according to at least some scholars, Ezekiel's tetramorph was actually based on an idol, a four-headed figure of Baal brought into the temple by various kings of Israel in the seventh and sixth centuries BC and possibly seen there by Ezekiel.³⁶ The circle is complete: a pagan idol of the Mediterranean tradition is converted by a Jewish prophet into a figure that accompanies a vision of the Messiah. Christian theologians and artists map this vision onto the vision of their Messiah and especially of the verbal accounts of him by the evangelists, only to have a Carolingian schoolman use words to attack this representation as a forbidden idol. Given this history, it is no wonder that Haimo and his colleagues in the school at Auxerre, as well as across the Carolingian lands, were confused by tetramorphs, by idols, and by images.

³⁵ An eleventh-century example is the tetramorph in the initial *E* from Ezechiel in the Lobbes Bible of 1084 (MS Tournai, Bibliothèque du Séminaire, 1). This comparison is particularly interesting because the Lobbes Bible tetramorph also has hooves and, as W. NEUSS noted (*Das Buch Ezechiel in Theologie und Kunst bis zum Ende des XII. Jahrhunderts* (Münster, 1912), p. 232), the image's roots are in Franco-Saxon illumination of the third quarter of the ninth century. The image of the tetramorph is reproduced as fig. 43.

³⁶ See Z. AMEISENOWA, "Animal-headed gods, evangelists, saints and righteous men", *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 12 (1949), pp. 36-37, relying on S. LANDESDORFER, *Baal Tetramorphos* (Paderborn, 1918).



Fig. 1 MS Paris, BN, lat. 9428, f. 15r

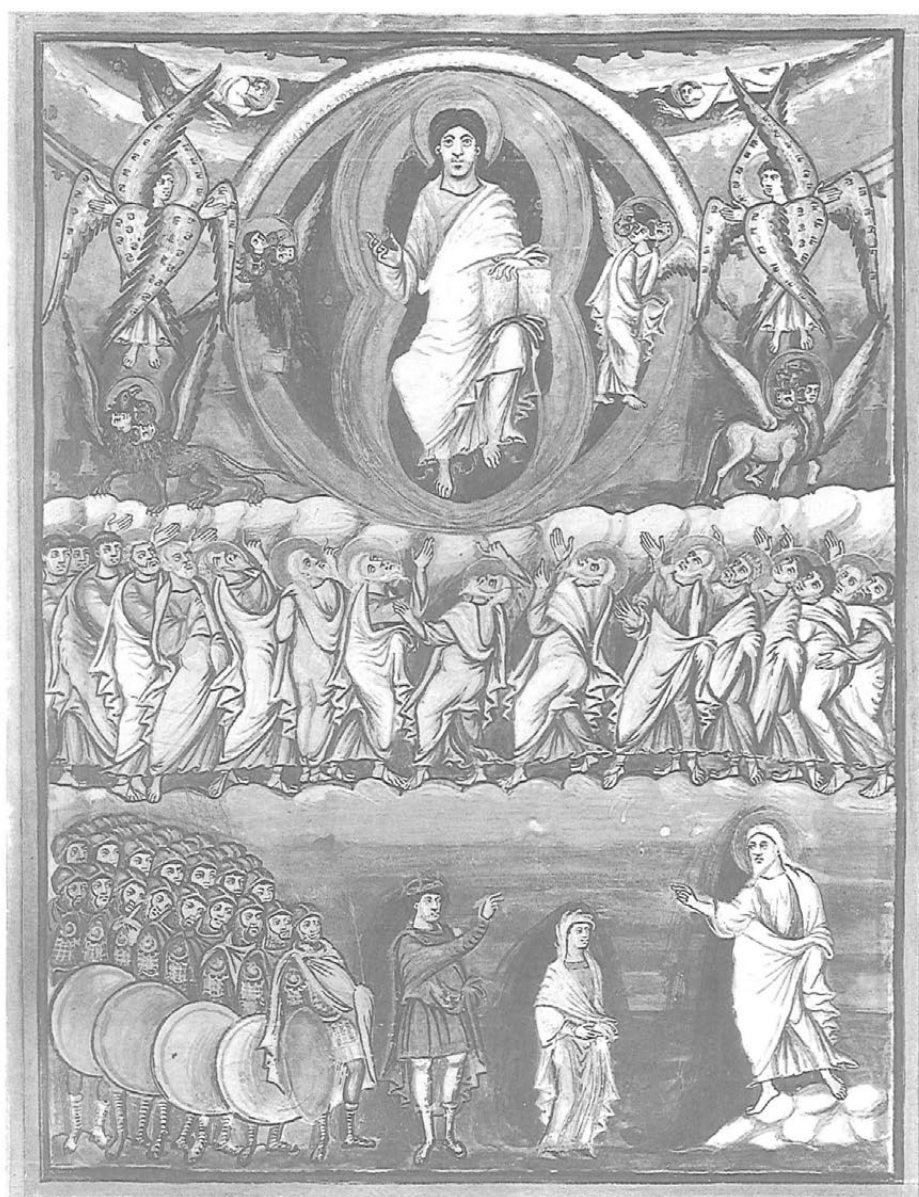


Fig. 2 MS Rome, Abbazia di San Paolo f.l.m., Bible, f. 117v

Carolingian Invisibles and Eriugena's *Lost Vision of God*

PAUL EDWARD DUTTON

While intellectuals in the early twelfth century were chiefly troubled by the particular problem of the universals, those in the ninth were preoccupied by the general problem of the nature and meaning of invisibles. And Eriugena, in many ways the most original of those thinkers, may have once written a treatise on the greatest invisible of them all, the source of all the others, the divine essence.

Today we tend to regard our invisibles – atoms, viruses, and black holes – as material and we have material ways of detecting them and confidently assume their materiality. We have even come to think of the mind itself as something material and to think that the material substance of drugs is the best way to massage cerebral masses. But the Middle Ages assumed that its most intimate unseens, angels and demons, were immaterial, active, and ever-present. The great invisible one, then and even now, is God the Father or the divine essence. Said Augustine: “Of all visible things the greatest is the world, of all invisible things the greatest is God”.¹ Yet Augustine was slow to come to that realization, for in his youth he had been, as most Romans were, a determined materialist. On the long journey that led him to conversion he confessed that he had first searched for and failed to find a material God, one subject to and classifiable within the ten categories.²

¹ Augustine, *De ciuitate dei* 11.4, ed. B. DOMBART and A. KALB, 2 vols. (Turnhout, 1955: CCSL 47-48), 2, p. 323.

² Augustine, *Confessiones*, 4.16. 28-29, ed. L. VERHEIJEN (Turnhout, 1981: CCSL 27), pp. 54-55.

The Carolingians knew an exhilarating range of invisibles, both the good and the bad. There was no greater glory for a ruler decked out in heavenly arms than to overcome invisible enemies said Sedulius Scottus.³ And, as Louis the Pious surrendered to his final death throes, he saw something that no one else apparently could; some invisible evil spirit, a malign force come to test him and collect him at the end of his days. He drove it away with a sudden shout.⁴

For the Carolingians the invisible not only lay behind and around the visible, fashioning the medieval equivalent of a parallel or rhomboidal universe, but its unseen agents worked in both worlds as interpenetrating powers. And even people now solid and seen might in death step across the divide to assume places of puissance and community among the unseen. In her heart-rending isolation, Dhuoda constructed a circle of living and dead family members to replace the tangible family that had been forced to leave her. Her invisible family was somehow closer, more real, and more comforting than her immediate one in the dark days of her abandonment in Uzès. And Rimbert argued that Anskar had suffered an invisible martyrdom, since, though the missionary had been told in divine dreams that he would die a martyr's death, he had in fact died peacefully in bed. Still, he had suffered the tortures of illness and self-deprivation that made him a martyr whose martyrdom others simply could not see or understand.⁵

In a time and place in which the invisible was assumed to be real there were privileges of particular perception granted to those few who possessed the inner eye needed to penetrate it. Audradus Modicus was one such, though he induced the states of ecstasy that granted him access to the divine through fasting and sensory deprivation. In visionary state he saw Christ and his angels, who were both visible and audible, and he met the holy ones at the borderline that ran between ether and air where Christ had promised he would meet the faithful (I Th 4, 16-17). The irrepressible canon of St-Martin's had established his own personal connection with the invisible and others seem to have regarded his gift with a mixture of suspicion and respect.⁶

³ Sedulius Scottus, *De rectoribus Christianis* 2 (carmen), ed. S. HELLMANN (Munich, 1906: *Quellen und Untersuchungen zur lateinischen Philologie des Mittelalters* 1.1), p. 27, vv. 19-21. He called those invisible enemies "*hostes aereos*".

⁴ Astronomer, *Vita Hludowici imperatoris* 64, ed. E. TREMP (Hannover, 1995: *MGH SRG in usum scholarum separatim editi* 64), p. 552.

⁵ Rimbert, *Vita Anskarii* 42, ed. G. WAITZ (Hannover, 1884: *MGH SRG in usum scholarum separatim editi* 55), pp. 77-78.

⁶ Audradus, *Liber reuelationum*, ed. L. TRAUBE, "O Roma nobilis: Philologische Untersuchungen aus dem Mittelalter", *Abhandlungen der philosophischen-philologischen Classe der königlich bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften* 19 (Munich, 1892), pp. 378-389. On

For the Carolingians the comprehensive wholeness of all things was signalled by the formula 'visible and invisible'. To young William, her son held in court custody, Dhuoda advised that if he followed the example of the unceasing vigilance of wise and loyal men he would be able not only to escape the invisible snares of evil spirits, but also the grasping claws of visible enemies.⁷ Thus, the good mother dealt with the dangers to her son by invoking a formula. And Eriugena called the wholeness of the invisible and visible NATVRA and he even included God within this all-encompassing scheme of everything, this all.

At Charles the Bald's triumphal coronation as king of Lotharingia at Metz in 869 the bishops prayed that he might always be made victorious over his visible and invisible enemies.⁸ On the Cathedra Petri, which may be best associated with that event and the atelier of that cathedral, the figure of Charles is surrounded by protective angels who offer him crowns and slay a dragon, while hostile men below climb up curling tendrils with bows and swords in hand; thus on the throne we encounter a pictorial formula for the visible and invisible enemies of a king. Down below on the bottom of three layers of ivory plaques we see deformed creatures, monstrosities, which Eriugena would have recognized as the hideous forms that irrationality takes; again, then, the unseen took shape.⁹

The framer of the crisscrossing fabric of the visible and invisible worlds of the Middle Ages was God the Father, the first person of the Trinity, whom the Nicene Creed calls "the Almighty Maker of all things visible and invisible". But could the Father himself be seen?

The *uisio dei* or beatific vision is one of those deep and perplexing matters made complex, perhaps even incomprehensible, by the equivocal witness of the

Audradus and his work, see P.E. DUTTON and H.L. KESSLER, *The Poetry and Paintings of the First Bible of Charles the Bald* (Ann Arbor, 1997: *Recentiores: Later Latin Texts and Contexts*), pp. 11-19, 38-40; and P.E. DUTTON, *The Politics of Dreaming in the Carolingian Empire* (Lincoln, Neb., 1994: *Regents Studies in Medieval Culture*), pp. 128-156.

⁷ Dhuoda, *Liber manualis* 4. 1, ed. P. RICHÉ, *Dhuoda, Manuel pour mon fils* (Paris, 1975: SC 225), p. 202.

⁸ *Ordo coronationis Karoli II 25*, ed. in: *Ordines Coronationis Franciae: Texts and Ordines for the Coronation of Frankish and French Kings and Queens in the Middle Ages*, ed. R.A. JACKSON, 2 vols. (Philadelphia, 1995-2001), 1, p. 107.

⁹ On this throne, see *La Cattedra lignea S. Pietro in Vaticano* (Vatican, 1971: *Memorie 10, Atti della Pontificia Accademia Romana di Archeologia, serie 3a*). See also L. NEES, *A Tainted Mantle: Hercules and the Classical Tradition at the Carolingian Court* (Philadelphia, 1991), pp. 147-257; N. STAUBACH, *Rex Christianus: Hofkultur und Herrschaftspropaganda im Reich Karls des Kahlen*, 2, *Die Grundlegung der "religion royale"* (Cologne, 1993: *Pictura et Poesis* 2.2), pp. 283-334; and P.E. DUTTON, *Charlemagne's Mustache and Other Cultural Clusters of a Dark Age* (New York, 2004: *The New Middle Ages*), pp. 122-125.

Bible.¹⁰ The evangelist John said that no man had seen God at any time (Io 1, 18), but Matthew claimed that the blessed would see God (Mt 5, 8) and that Christ had proclaimed that the angels of the children of God always see the face of his Father in heaven (Mt 18, 10). And the first letter of John confidently stated that “we shall see God as he is” when he appears (I Io 3, 2). Thus, the *uisio dei* was, from its scriptural start in the canon, paradoxical. Moses himself supplies equivocal evidence. When he begged to see God’s face, God answered that he could not “for no man sees me and still lives” (Ex 33, 20). Instead God passed before Moses and covered his eyes until he had passed “so that you may see my back, but my face is not to be seen” (Ex 33, 21-23). Thus, God was prepared to show Moses his backside, his hind parts, as the Douay-Rheims Bible would have it, but not his face, that is, not unless Moses was ready to die in order to see him. The vision of God was achievable, but the price was the ultimate one. Strangely, in Genesis, Moses had already stated that “I have seen God face to face” (Gn 32, 30). The Apostle Paul, transported to the third heaven, characterized the future vision of God in the same terms: “Now we see only puzzling reflections in a mirror, but then we shall see face to face” (I Cor 13, 12).

Christians wishing to find safer ground could look for God in his creation. “For the invisible things of him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made; his eternal power also, and divinity...” (Rm 1, 20), which was a passage from Paul that supplied a central justification for inquiry into natural things in the early Middle Ages.¹¹

For medieval Christian thinkers searching for the contours of the divine, inductive reasoning led them via the created world to limited knowledge of its invisible creator. Eriugena’s neoplatonic thought too was defined by that central assumption: “For there is nothing”, he said, “of visible and corporeal things, I believe, that does not signify something incorporeal and intelligible”.¹²

In the five modes of distinguishing being and non-being that Eriugena sets out at the start of his *Periphyseon* (of which only the first three directly concern us here), the first concerns perception, for those things that appear to be are not (comprised as they are of mere accidents) while those things that are not

¹⁰ See now the monumental study by C. TROTTMANN, *La vision béatifique: des disputes scolastiques à sa définition par Benoît XII* (Rome, 1995: *Bibliothèque des écoles françaises d’Athènes et de Rome* 289). Also see V. LOSSKY, *Vision de Dieu* (Neuchâtel, 1962).

¹¹ Cf. Hbr 11, 1: “faith is the substance of things to be hoped for, the evidence of things not seen”.

¹² Eriugena, *Periphyseon* 5, ed. É. JEAUNEAU, *Iohannis Scotti seu Eriuganae Periphyseon: Liber quintus* (Turnhout, 2003: CCCM 165), p. 10 (the standard divisions in the edition of J. FLOSS, are printed herein: PL 122, cols. 865D-866A).

detected by sense, intellect, and reason are (God, pure matter, and the reasons and essences of things). Thus the unseen is and the seen is not. The second mode (which works downwards from the highest intellectual power near God) is hierarchical in structure, so that humans have being and plants do not, but angels have being and humans do not. Here the negation of the higher is the affirmation of the lower and the reverse, for the being or non-being of each thing is relative with respect to the excellence of the one above and the inferiority of those below. In the third mode, God brings things into visible existence in this visible world at specific times and specific places according to a sequence only he knows. In one way, then, those already visibly manifest are said to be while those yet hidden are said not to be or the reverse.¹³ In these shifting determinations of being and non-being, visibility itself is inferior to invisibility; and, seen from the human vantage point, non-being (that is, the relative non-being or hyper-being of angels and God) is superior to being (that is, the in-between being that Man has and is). The holder of such a philosophy, one might have guessed, would be forced at some point in his career to grapple with the problem of both the past and future visibility of God as described and promised by scripture.

Yet the *uisio dei* was a persistent puzzle for all. The issue had troubled Augustine and what perplexed Hippo was eventually bound to challenge controversy-prone Carolingian courts. In his letter to Paulina, Augustine confronted the scriptural dilemma facing believers: "How, therefore, did Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Job, Moses, Michah, and Isaiah see God (and if there are also others about whom the True Scripture testifies that they too saw God), if no human 'has ever seen God, nor can ever see him?' ".¹⁴ But the letter to Paulina lies at the midpoint of Augustine's evolving position on the *uisio dei*. Earlier in a letter of consolation to the widow Italica he had denied that we would see God in the flesh, for only like can see like and since God is invisible and incorruptible (that is, immaterial) he cannot be seen corporeally.¹⁵ In the letter to Paulina, which we know better as the chaptered treatise called the *De uidendo deo*, he moved the problem to one of God's omnipotence:

¹³ Eriugena, *Periphyseon* 1, ed. É. JEAUNEAU, *Iohannis Scotti seu Eriugenae Periphyseon: Liber primus* (Turnhout, 1996: CCCM 161), pp. 5-8 (ed. FLOSS, *PL* 122, cols. 443A-446A).

¹⁴ Augustine, *Epistola* 147 (*De uidendo dei*, 5 (14)), ed. A. GOLDBACHER, *S. Aureli Augustini Hipponiensis episcopi epistulae*, pars 3, ep. CXXIV-CLXXXIV (Vienna, 1904: CSEL 44), p. 287.

¹⁵ Augustine, *Epistola* 92.3-5, ed. A. GOLDBACHER, *S. Aureli Augustini Hipponiensis episcopi epistulae*, pars 2, ep. XXXI-CXXIII (Vienna, 1898: CSEL 34), pp. 438-443.

Thus, God is invisible by nature, [and] not only the Father, but also the Trinity itself, the one God, and because [he is] not only invisible but unchangeable as well, he appears to whom[ever] he wishes in what[ever] form he wishes, so that his invisible and unchangeable nature remains complete in him.¹⁶

And he effectively concluded the treatise by saying:

Do not be influenced by those who say thoughtlessly: "What then will bodily eyes see if they will not see God? Will those eyes be either blind or without function?" Those who say these things do not grasp that if there are no bodies, there will certainly be no bodily eyes. If, however, there are bodies, there will be [something] that bodily eyes can see.¹⁷

By the time he came to write the final book of the *City of God* he admitted that the saints would see but that their sight would be extraordinary in its power, not in the way that sharp-sighted animals such as snakes and eagles see, but in its capacity to see the immaterial.¹⁸ Augustine held that we may know ourselves, our inner lives, through an inner sense, but we cannot know the inner lives of others; only that we see them as visible beings.¹⁹ But in the new heaven and earth we shall see and see physically, observing God in utter clarity and distinction. Yet he was uncertain what nature that seeing would take, whether it would be of an intellectual or spiritual nature. He was convinced that there would be a *uisio dei*, but that its character remained beyond perfect human ken in the here and now.²⁰

For most Carolingian thinkers, Augustine had mapped the topography of a twisted and rocky landscape, but he had shifted ground so subtly that much depended on what work of his one read. Maïeul Cappuyns recognized three stages to the minor Carolingian controversy over the vision of God, all of them connected to Augustine's teaching.²¹ In the first, a certain Candidus (probably from Fulda) during the reign of Louis the Pious was asked his opinion on the question by someone who had come across Augustine's unequivocal letter to Italica; he responded by employing Augustine's *De uidendo deo* to reinterpret

¹⁶ Augustine, *Epistola* 147 (*De uidendo dei*, 8 (20)), p. 293.

¹⁷ Augustine, *Epistola* 147 (*De uidendo dei*, 23 (54)), p. 331.

¹⁸ Augustine, *De ciuitate dei* 22.29, p. 859.

¹⁹ Augustine, *De ciuitate dei* 22.29, p. 861.

²⁰ On his final approbation, see Augustine, *Retractationes* 2.41, ed. A. MUTZENBECHER (Turnhout, 1984: CCSL 57), p. 123.

²¹ M. CAPPUYNS, "Note sur le problème de la vision béatifique au IX^e s.," *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale* 1 (1929), pp. 98-107. And see TROTTMANN, *La vision béatifique*, pp. 74-83.

the earlier Augustine.²² When Candidus argued that God was invisible to those who are impure, another writer at Fulda, perhaps Hrabanus Maurus himself, responded with his own *De uidendo deum*.²³ Both those works were closely dependent on Augustine's letters. As with the predestination controversy, this one soon passed from the eastern to the western part of the Carolingian empire, but it is striking that it too had its origins at Fulda and had many of the same actors that the overheated predestination dispute did.

Gottschalk was centrally involved and his reading of Augustine was, as always, provocative. In a poem he sent to Ratramnus of Corbie around 849 he noted that he had sent passages from Augustine to three individuals, one of whom was Lupus of Ferrières.²⁴ One of these passages was taken from the *uisio dei* discussion of the *City of God*.²⁵ The abbot answered in prickly fashion that the first passage on whether fleshly eyes would possess mental vision on the day of resurrection should not be answered since Augustine himself in the absence of scriptural authority had chosen not to explain it.²⁶ The second matter concerned seeing God in each other, in himself both in the new heaven and new earth, and in every created thing. Lupus could not understand Gottschalk's perplexity since Augustine and his interpretation of the Bible had, he thought, been extremely perceptive and he had arrived at a notion that it was through "knowledge of the spirit" that the worthy would see God. At the end of the letter, Lupus called on Gottschalk to cease troubling himself over such matters and to devote himself instead, as it were, not to a selective set of inscrutable problems, but to a humble survey "of that most spacious field of sacred scriptures".²⁷ That was Lupus's warning to his old schoolmate against selective reading, which may have been Gottschalk's abiding methodological sin.

It may well be that it was Gottschalk's probing of the *uisio dei* in the wake of his condemnations at Mainz in 848 and Quierzy in 849 that threatened to open a second front in his rethinking of Carolingian orthodoxy. He not only wrote to Lupus, but also to Jonas of Orléans, who was a close official of King Charles, and his poem to Ratramnus suggests that his purpose was to engage

²² *Epistola Candidi*, ed. E. DÜMMLER, in: *Epistolae Karolini aevi (II)*, ed. E. DÜMMLER et al. (Hannover, 1895: MGH EPP 4), pp. 557-561, and also edited in: PL 106, cols. 103-108.

²³ *De uidendo deum*, ed. in: PL 112, cols. 1261-1282.

²⁴ See Gottschalk, *carmen* 7, ed. L. TRAUBE, *Poetae Latini aevi Karolini (III)* (Berlin, 1896: MGH PP 3), p. 736, vv. 107-126.

²⁵ Augustine, *De ciuitate dei* 22. 29, pp. 861-862.

²⁶ Lupus, *Epistola* 80, ed. L. LEVILLAIN, *Loup de Ferrières: Correspondance*, 2 vols (Paris, 1964: *Les classiques de l'histoire au Moyen Age* 10, 16), 2, pp. 42-54. See also *Servati Lupi epistulae*, ed. P.K. MARSHALL (Leipzig, 1984).

²⁷ Lupus, *Epistola* 80, p. 54.

those at the western court. And we do know that King Charles the Bald himself became interested in the question, for he asked a certain wise man his opinion on eight theological problems, the last of which concerned the *uisio dei*.²⁸ The treatise written in response sits today in the *Patrologia Latina* among Hincmar of Rheims's writings, but the grounds for assigning it to Hincmar are thin. Nonetheless, it too presents an uncontroversial restatement of Augustine's opinions on the *uisio dei*.²⁹ And Flodoard listed among Hincmar's works a *De uidendo deo*, which he called the *Ferculum Salomonis*.³⁰

It is not impossible that it was in the midst of this new debate that Eriugena wrote a now lost treatise called the *De uisione dei*. Eriugena had become at about this time the new master of the court school of Charles the Bald and so may have learned of Gottschalk's inquiries to other scholars at the court. In 850-851 he was commissioned by Pardulus of Laon and Hincmar of Rheims to assemble his thoughts on predestination to counter Gottschalk's views. The *De diuina praedestinatione*, today survives in but one manuscript (MS Paris, BN, lat. 13386, ff. 103r-158v), which came from Corbie.³¹ That work is expository and philosophical in nature and stands out within Eriugena's corpus because of its unusual form since his other work consists of poems, translations, commentaries, glosses, and the great dialogue, *Periphyseon*.

In July 1672 Jean Mabillon set off from Paris on his *voyage littéraire* through northern France and Flanders. At that time he was preparing the fourth age of the *Acta Sanctorum* and was particularly interested in texts concerning the eucharistic controversy and also those about or from Gottschalk and Eriugena. Around 9 September he arrived in the vicinity of St-Omer where he planned to reside in the abbey of St-Bertin, the last stop on his excursion.³²

²⁸ *De diuersa et multiplici animae ratione ad Carolum Caluum*, ed. in: *PL* 125, cols. 931C-932A. See also Lupus, *Epistola* 78, ed. LEVILLAIN, 2, p. 36; there Lupus reported that recently in Bourges (Dec. 849-Jan. 850) the king had asked him his views on predestination, free will, and redemption of the Blood of Christ, so that the set of questions to the "wise man" in the *De diuersa* fits within the king's normal practice of soliciting opinions on theological matters.

²⁹ *De diuersa* 8: "*Utrum substantia diuinitatis corporalibus oculis post resurrectionem corporum uideatur*", ed. in: *PL* 125, cols. 943B-947D.

³⁰ Flodoard, *Historia Remensis Ecclesiae* 3.15, ed. G. WAITZ, in: *Supplementa tomorum I-XII, pars I* (Hannover, 1881: *MGH SS* 13), p. 502. The *Ferculum Salomonis* found in: *PL* 125, cols. 817B-834A is apparently not this work.

³¹ See *Iohannis Scotti De diuina praedestinatione liber*, ed. G. MADEC (Turnhout, 1978: *CCCM* 50), pp. V-XVII.

³² See E. MARTÈNE, *Voyage littéraire de deux religieux benedictins de la Congregation de Saint Maur*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1717; repr. 1969), 1.2, pp. 183-187; J. LECLERCQ, "Mabillon", in: *Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie* 10.1 (Paris, 1931), pp. 467-474; H. LECLERCQ, *Mabillon*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1953-1957), 1, pp. 93, 108-109; J.M. BESSE, "Les corres-

During that stay he visited the Cistercian monastery of Clairmarais and there, as he says:

I discovered a book on the vision of God in a Clairmarais codex near St-Omer with this title and incipit: The Treatise of Johannes Scottus on the Vision of God, "Omnes sensus corporei ex conjunctione nascuntur animae et corporis, etc". In that treatise the author treats the same theme (if I recall well) that abbot Lupus of Ferrières treats in letter 30 to Gottschalk monk of Orbais.³³

On the basis of Mabillon's witness, both Cappuyns and I.P. Sheldon-Williams thought the work likely to be genuine, though Cappuyns did wonder if it might have been composed of extracts from the *Periphyseon*.³⁴ Its incipit does bear some resemblance to a definition of *exterior sensus* in that work, as Cappuyns pointed out, but the issue there is different and the definition is not an exact match with the incipit.³⁵

Mabillon's witness was doubtless based on a physical examination of the codex itself, since only in it could he have found the work's opening words. Bertin de Visser, a monk of Clairmarais, wrote a three-volume history of the monastery and in the second copied a late thirteenth or early fourteenth-century catalogue of its manuscripts. Under the heading HUGONIS OPERA the catalogue listed a codex containing:

pondants cisterciens de Dom Luc d'Achery et de Dom Mabillon", *Revue Mabillon* 8 (1913-1914), p. 21; U. BERLIÈRE, "Mabillon et la Belgique: Le voyage de Flandre (1672): correspondance", *Revue Mabillon* 4 (1908-1909), pp. 9-10.

³³ *Acta Sanctorum ordinis s. Benedicti in saeculorum classes distributa. Saeculum quartum, quod est ab anno Christi DCCC ad DCCCC ..., pars secunda* (Venice, 1738; originally printed in 1680), p. XLVI: "Librum de visione Dei ego deprehendi in ms. codice Claromaricensi prope Audomaropolim, cum hoc titulo & initio: TRACTATUS JOHANNIS SCOTTI DE VISIONE DEI Omnes sensus corporei ex conjunctione nascuntur animae et corporis, etc. In eo tractatu Auctor idem argumentum tractat (si bene recolo) quod Lupus Abbas Ferrariensis in epistola 30. ad Gothescalcum Monachum Orbacensem".

³⁴ M. CAPPUYNS, *Jean Scot Érigène: Sa vie, son oeuvre, sa pensée* (Paris, 1933), p. 98; CAPPUYNS, "Note sur le problème", p. 105; I.P. SHELDON-WILLIAMS, "A bibliography of the works of Johannes Scottus Eriugena", *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 10 (1960), p. 221. J. DRÄSEKE, "Zu Maximus Confessor", *Zeitschrift für wissenschaftliche Theologie* 47 (1904), p. 259, deemed the work spurious and wondered if it might have been a copy of the *Scala caeli* major of Honorius Augustodunensis.

³⁵ Eriugena, *Periphyseon* 2, ed. É. JEAUNEAU, *Iohannis Scotti seu Eriugenae Periphyseon: Liber secundus* (Turnhout, 1997: CCCM 162), p. 59 (ed. FLOSS in: PL 122, col. 569A): "ut aiunt graeci, coniunctio quaedam est animae et corporis...".

*Hilarius super Matthaeum. – Regulae Tichonii. – Libri Gennadii, Ysidori, de illustribus viris. – Liber pronosticorum futuri seculi. – Joannes Scotus de visione Dei, in 1^o vol.*³⁶

In 1618 the Jesuit Andreas Schott consulted the codex for his edition of the *Liber Tichonii*.³⁷ Mabillon's *Acta Sanctorum* volume only appeared in 1680, but by 1681 Thomas Gale, the first editor of the *Periphyseon*, stated in print after citing Mabillon's description: "I have gone to some trouble to have this book of Scottus sent to me, but hitherto have had no success".³⁸ The codex had apparently disappeared from the monastery before its dissolution and the making of the final catalogue of its manuscripts in 1791, and the anonymous author of the *De uita et praeceptis Joannis Scoti Erigenae*, which was written around 1835, simply noted that after Mabillon no one had seen the book, though many had searched for it with great vigour.³⁹ We may never know what happened to that precious volume, which held the relatively rare *Regulae Tichonii* and the unique copy of the *De uisione dei*, but it is striking that it was after the interest aroused by Mabillon's discovery that the codex went missing.⁴⁰

³⁶ H. DE LAPLANE, *L'abbaye de Clairmarais d'après ses archives* (St.-Omer, 1864), p. 260. De Laplane used Bertin de Vissery's copy of the medieval catalogue of the library of Clairmarais as the basis for his re-edition, but was forced to conclude that Vissery's copy was either poorly made or that the original had been defective. MS Oxford, Bodleian Library, Marshall 21, a twelfth-century manuscript from St-Peter's of Ghent, contains the *Commentarius Hilarii Pictavensis super Mattheum* followed by the *Liber Tichonii de vii^{tem} regulis* and is likely related to the Clairmarais manuscript in some way. On this manuscript, see F. MADAN, H.H.E. CRASTER, and N. DENHOLM-YOUNG, *A Summary Catalogue of Western Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library at Oxford*, 7 vols. (Oxford, 1895-1953), 2.2, p. 994. Édouard Jeuneau kindly examined the manuscript for me on one of his trips to Oxford.

³⁷ Schott's edition of the *Liber Tichonii* appeared in the *Magna Bibliotheca Veterum Patrum* in 1622 (see *Maxima Bibliotheca Veterum Patrum, et Antiquorum Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum* (Lyons, 1677), p. 49F-H: "TICHONII m.s. cod. Claromarisci Abbatia iuxta Audomaropolim quem contulit P. And. Schottus Soc. Iesu. an. 1618").

³⁸ T. GALE, *Praefatio* to his edition *Joannis Scoti Erigenae De Divisione Naturae libri quinque diu desiderati* (Oxford, 1681) and reprinted in: PL 122, col. 97C: "Dedi ego operam, ut ad me perveniret hic Scoti liber; sed conatui adhuc non respondit successus".

³⁹ See DE LAPLANE, *L'abbaye de Clairmarais*, pp. 265-281 and ANON., *De uita et praeceptis Joannis Scoti Erigenae* 1.6, ed. in: PL 122, col. 48B.

⁴⁰ Mabillon himself was allowed in one case to borrow one of the monastery's manuscripts and so perhaps were others: see DE LAPLANE, *L'abbaye de Clairmarais*, p. 254. Mabillon was in the habit of requesting the loan of manuscripts, but St.-Martin of Tournai refused him since it had recently lost thirty-six manuscripts to learned borrowers: see LECLERCQ, "Mabillon", p. 471. Some of the letters Thomas Gale sent to Mabillon are to be found in MS Paris, BN, fr. 19653, ff. 8r-26r, including a note on books Gale desired to acquire through Mabillon. On the library of

The codex with its various treatises was probably a twelfth-century compilation and would have had its contents listed on the cover as did other Clairmarais manuscripts; hence Mabillon's initial identification of the unknown work.⁴¹ If the treatise was indeed composed by Eriugena around 850 when Gottschalk was pursuing the question, then it would be the second example of Eriugena's work as a controversialist, again on a contentious matter raised by Gottschalk. This scenario is not, after all, inconceivable since Eriugena was Charles the Bald's school master throughout the 850s and, even though he was chiefly working at the time upon Liberal Arts texts such as those of Martianus Capella and Priscian,⁴² he may have welcomed the challenge of taking up theological matters. He was apparently flattered to be called upon to write on the problem of predestination, though his emphasis on a doctrine of radical free will was to excite considerable criticism. Still from the little information that Mabillon supplied, it is possible to speculate that the *De uisione dei* may have been a treatise like the *De diuina praedestinatione*, that is, not a commentary or a dialogue, but a relatively short and independent theological treatise.

But here we come to a Borgesian fork in the road of our pursuit of a tract whose identification and attribution we cannot confidently confirm. For if this treatise was written around 850, as Mabillon himself with his reference to Lupus suspected, it would fit into a fascinating moment in Carolingian thought. At the heart of the great Carolingian theological controversies including the iconodule debate was the problem of the invisible or the learned negotiation between the visible material world and the unseen Truth lying behind it. The eucharistic controversy was centrally concerned, after all, with the question of the visible form of the host and its invisible, internal power and being, whether real or symbolic. And the underlying threat of Gottschalk's predestinarian claims, the one that so unnerved bishops and kings, was the threatening notion that the true church was invisible.⁴³

For official Carolingians their church was not just universal; it was *the* Church, the true church, and had been effectively realized in this world. It was

Clairmarais and its fortunes, see F. DOLBEAU, "Le légendier de l'abbaye cistercienne de Clairmarais", *Analecta Bollandiana* 91 (1973), pp. 273-286. Dolbeau notes (p. 275) that MS Paris, BN, lat. 12588, ff. 181r-185v contains an inventory of the Clairmarais manuscripts with an inscription "Pour D. Mabillon".

⁴¹ DE LAPLANE, *L'abbaye de Clairmarais*, p. 242.

⁴² For the latter, see P.E. DUTTON and A. LUHTALA, "Eriugena in Priscianum", *Mediaeval Studies* 56 (1994), pp. 153-163.

⁴³ That was later, of course, to be an important doctrine of Martin Luther. See J.M. HEADLEY, *Luther's View of Church History* (New Haven, 1963), pp. 31-33.

presided over by churchmen and kings, and was fully efficacious through the sacraments. Said Charlemagne:

Believe in this one church, that is, the congregation of the good throughout this earthly sphere; and know that they only can be saved and belong to the kingdom of heaven, who in faith, communion, and the charity of this church persevere until the end, while those who for their sins are excommunicated from this church and fail penitently to return to the same, cannot in this world render acceptable service to God.⁴⁴

Charlemagne's drive whether in educational reform (as in the capitulary *De litteris colendis*) or in estate management (as in the *De uillis*) was to achieve perfected institutions and practices in the here and now. His late church was an already achieved one that required occasional and particular reform precisely because it was a perfectible entity.

But the implication of Gottschalk's probing of both predestination and the vision of God was to remove the true church from this earthly realm almost entirely to heaven, to postpone its perfectibility, and to cede to God and not to humans all determination of rectitude. Double predestination invoked that Augustinian division between the saved and the damned at the end of time and if, in the matter of the beatific vision, God was to be seen face to face after the resurrection that too had the effect of shifting perfection and realization to the invisible church of the saved and to leave the visible, this-worldly one, a weak, unrealized, and imperfect human creation. That, of course, ran against the growing Carolingian religious tendency to materialize the holy. Hilduin and Einhard's trade in relics, the collecting of sumptuous liturgical instruments in treasuries such as the one at St-Riquier, the building of large and impressive churches, the interest in making art and taking physical pilgrimages, were all symptoms of a material fixing of the spirit. But then Gottschalk and Claudius of Turin, the chief critics of that tendency, were Carolingian reactionaries who doubted the very drift of their times and, thus, indirectly the religious world that Charlemagne and his line had sponsored.

If Eriugena did write a treatise on the vision of God around 850 before his full encounter with Greek patristic thought, one can hardly imagine what it would have looked like. But it is more likely that the *De uisione dei* was a late work, though it may still have been one informed by mid-century controversies.

⁴⁴ *Admonitio generalis* (802), tr. J.I. MOMBERT (1888) after the edn. by G.H. PERTZ, *Capitularia regum Francorum* (Hannover, 1835: MGH LL 1), p. 102 in P.E. DUTTON, *Carolingian Civilization: A Reader*, 2nd ed. (Peterborough, Ont., 2004), p. 93.

The *Vision of God* may, indeed, have been one of his last works, in which case its setting may become more obscure, but its doctrines somewhat clearer.

The reason for suspecting that it was written after his other great works is that some traces of its doctrines may survive in the works of later masters. In a late twelfth-century sermon, Garnier of Rochefort, the abbot of Clairvaux (1186-1193), attributed to Johannes Scottus a division of the divine manifestations of heaven into *theophania*, *epiphania*, *hyperphania*, and *hypophania*.⁴⁵ In one of his later sermons he entered into a lengthy discussion of theophanies based on teachings of Eriugena not now locatable in extant texts.⁴⁶ Other masters such as Alain de Lille, Master Martin, Simon of Tournai, and Albert the Great realized that *epiphania*, *hyperphania*, and *hypophania* were all types or distinctions of theophany and they, like Garnier, quoted definitions that they often attributed to Eriugena.⁴⁷

1. EPIPHANIA: *ministeriis incalescentis affectionis, altioris intuitus iudiciiue libra resultatio distributa*

2. HYPERPHANIA: *diuina contemplatio sui participem insigniens scalari reuerentia usumque eius edocens arcensque contrarium*

3. HYPOPHANIA: *diuinum participium nature legibus occurens archana reserans pro discreta capacitate*.⁴⁸

At present it may not be possible to know with any confidence what each of these definitions fully means, but the first refers to the view of the divine and the echo of the divine judgment distributed downward by angels; the second to divine contemplation setting out the participation of itself by hierarchical grades, teaching its usefulness, and forbidding the opposite; and the third to that divine participation found in the laws of nature and revealing the hidden secrets of things.

Garnier and the others may have learned of these definitions from each other, but their original source has yet to be determined. Still it is striking that the abbot of Clairvaux should have quoted Eriugena on a matter touching on the

⁴⁵ Garnier de Rochefort, *Sermo IX: In die Epiphaniae*, ed. in: *PL* 205, col. 631B; and see also col. 632B.

⁴⁶ Garnier de Rochefort, *Sermo XXXV: In capitulo generali*, ed. in: *PL* 205, cols. 794A-B, 795C, 796B-797A.

⁴⁷ See the texts assembled and studied by H.-F. DONDAINE, "Cinq citations de Jean Scot chez Simon de Tournai", *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale* 17 (1950), pp. 303-311.

⁴⁸ These definitions, forms of which occur throughout the writings of these authors, derive from the *Summa* of Simon of Tournai and are found in MS Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, 519, ff. 21ra-22rb, ed. DONDAINE, "Cinq citations de Jean Scot", pp. 305-306.

uisio dei and that the Cistercian monastery of Clairmarais should have been the only known holder of Eriugena's purported work on the theme, the one that Mabillon encountered on that September day in 1672. The Cistercians were keenly interested in the topic of the beatific vision and they knew and possessed copies of other Eriugenian works.⁴⁹

Some of these early thirteenth-century masters claimed that they had obtained this particular breakdown of theophanies from Eriugena's commentary on the *Celestial Hierarchy*, which is not impossible, but the text that survives today lacks those definitions, though the word *epiphania* does occur once in it.⁵⁰ Nor can this particular division or its complex definitions be found in any other extant work of Eriugena, as H.-F. Dondaine determined. Hence one is left to wonder if a more advanced classification of theophanies by Eriugena was once contained in the *De uisione dei*, which would have been its natural home, or if the attribution itself was simply a mistake.

What we cannot doubt is that the concept of the theophanies itself was central to Eriugena's thought and a relatively original aspect of it, at least in the medieval west. The mature Eriugena was also much interested in the vision of God and the subject appears in virtually all of his later works: the *Periphyseon*, *Expositiones in Ierarchiam coelestem*, and the commentary on the Gospel of John.⁵¹ In this last work, he commented on Io 1,18, "no one has ever seen God". He thought that if this applied exclusively to the Father the meaning was clear and that then the Son and Spirit could be thought to appear visible to earthly eyes.⁵² But Eriugena refused ever to take the simple way out. He held that the

⁴⁹ See M.-D. CHENU, "Erigène à Cîteaux: Expérience intérieure et spiritualité objective", in: *La philosophie et ses problèmes: Recueil d'études de doctrine et d'histoire offert à Mgr. R. Jolivet* (Lyons, 1960), pp. 99-107.

⁵⁰ *Iohannis Scoti Eriugena expositiones in Ierarchiam coelestem* 6. 181, ed. J. BARBET (Turnhout, 1975: CCCM 31), p. 91. Eriugena also employed the word several times in the *Periphyseon*: see Eriugena, *Periphyseon* 1, ed. JEAUNEAU, CCCM 161, p. 71 (PL 122, col. 493B); Eriugena, *Periphyseon* 5, ed. JEAUNEAU, CCCM 165, pp. 200-201 (PL 122, col. 1003C-D).

⁵¹ For studies of Eriugena's notion of the vision of God, its context, and influence, see J.M. ALONSO, "Teofanía y visión beata en Escoto Eriugena", *Revista Española de Teología* 10 (1950), pp. 361-389 and 11 (1951), pp. 255-281; J.J. O'MEARA, "Eriugena's use of Augustine in his teaching on the return of the soul and the vision of God", in: *Jean Scot Erigène et l'histoire de la philosophie*, ed. R. ROQUES (Paris, 1977: *Colloques Internationaux du C.N.R.S.* 561), pp. 191-200; D.J. O'MEARA, "Eriugena and Aquinas on the beatific vision", in: *Eriugena Redivivus: Zur Wirkungsgeschichte seines Denkens im Mittelalter und im Übergang zur Neuzeit: Vorträge des V. Internationalen Eriugena-Colloquiums, Werner-Reimers-Stiftung Bad Homburg, 26.-30. August 1985*, ed. W. BEIERWALTES (Heidelberg, 1987), pp. 224-236.

⁵² Eriugena, *Iohannis Scotti Commentarius in Euangelium Iohannis* 1.25, ed. É. JEAUNEAU, *Jean Scot, Commentaire sur l'Évangile de Jean* (Paris, 1972: SC 180), pp. 114-120.

Evangelist was referring instead to the Trinity whose essence and substance were never seen. What humans, even the holy ones, saw were theophanies of God, that is, divine apparitions or illuminations,⁵³ but the purer and more refined the soul, the deeper the theophany. “But God himself, ‘who is better known by not knowing’, and ‘the ignorance of whom is true wisdom’, is entirely invisible”.⁵⁴ God is at the same time unknowable and transcends the ontological; thus, being beyond the knowable, he does not know himself. For our part, we are better off reflecting on God as a cause than as an essence. At the Return (the *reditus*) the human as a product of unification, simplification, and elevation will return to God. But we shall not see God in himself. Rather, it is:

through bodies in bodies, not through himself, that he will be seen. Likewise, [it is] through intellect in intellects, through reason in reasons, not through itself that the divine essence will appear.⁵⁵

Eriugena maintained that “in itself the divine essence is comprehensible to no corporeal sense, to no reason, and to no intellect, either human or angelic”.⁵⁶

But angels (and humans) may behold divine manifestations made in them by him and these are called theophanies.⁵⁷ And here is the critical point for Eriugena, one that separates him from those who think that God is seen through likenesses (*per similitudines*), since for him the theophany is God:

You [the Nutritor] even added that not only the divine essence itself existing immutably in itself is to be called God, but also those theophanies, which are made from it and of it in an intellectual nature, are proclaimed by the name of God.⁵⁸

Thus the word ‘God’ indicated not only the divine essence, but also that mode by which God manifests himself, which the Greeks called a theophany or self-manifestation of God.⁵⁹ But it is important to bear in mind that the capacity of each person would distinguish the depth of the theophany. Moreover, if each

⁵³ According to the *Expositiones* 6, p. 77: “*hoc est Dei apparitio uel Dei illuminatio...*”.

⁵⁴ *Commentarius in Euangelium Iohannis* 1.25, p. 126: “*Ipse enim omnino inuisibilis est, ‘qui melius nesciendo scitur’, et ‘cuius ignorantia uera est sapientia’*”. The two quotations as documented at length by Jeauneau in footnotes 20 and 21 are from Augustine’s *De ordine* and the Pseudo-Dionysius.

⁵⁵ Eriugena, *Periphyseon* 1, ed. JEAUNEAU, CCCM 161, p. 15 (PL 122, col. 450C).

⁵⁶ Eriugena, *Periphyseon* 1, ed. JEAUNEAU, CCCM 161, p. 11 (PL 122, col. 447C).

⁵⁷ Eriugena, *Periphyseon* 1, ed. JEAUNEAU, CCCM 161, p. 12 (PL 122, col. 448B-C).

⁵⁸ Eriugena, *Periphyseon* 1, ed. JEAUNEAU, CCCM 161, p. 11 (PL 122, col. 448B).

⁵⁹ Eriugena, *Periphyseon* 1, ed. JEAUNEAU, CCCM 161, p. 9 (PL 122, col. 446D).

thing is itself a theophany, it is, according to Dondaine, the visible apparition of the invisible, the manifestation of the invisible in a divinized creature.⁶⁰

The topic of the *uisio dei* in the Middle Ages is immense and Eriugena's handling of it original. Some day the lost *Vision of God* may resurface, but in the meantime it may repay our attention to look more closely at some of those Cistercian and scholastic reflections that seem, however obscurely at points, to suggest his influence, an influence that would seem to derive from some lost link in the transmission of Eriugena's thought.⁶¹ In the meantime, we might also begin to rethink the implications of the ninth century's precocious discussion of the vision of God and how it fits within the wider Carolingian debate on the invisible. Behind their renewed interest in the puzzle of the beatific vision, we may suspect, lies a changing conception of and challenge to the Carolingian church and the fluctuating fortunes of its royal house.

⁶⁰ H.-F. DONDAINE, "L'objet et le 'medium' de la vision béatifique chez les théologiens du XIII^e siècle", *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale* 19 (1952), pp. 64-65.

⁶¹ At the conference itself I had concluded the paper with a discussion of the painting of Eriugena's fourfold division of NATVRA in the *Clavis Physicae* of Honorius Augustodunensis as found in MS Paris, BN, lat. 7634, f. 3v. I was struck by the fact that the three angels under Ignis are progressively darker from left to right: the left angel is fair skinned; the middle angel has a pale face, but darkened neck; and the angel on our right has both his neck and face darkened, all of which would be consistent with Eriugena's characterization of the angels as "burning fires" (Ps 103, 4) and that the very names for the Seraphim and Thrones refer to those who burn. If that was the deliberate work of the painter, then what was one to make of the fact that today the face and hands of Christ as FINIS (or *reditus*) in the bottom register are dark and the facial features obscured? Honorius and the painter were generally faithful to Eriugena's theological teaching in the *Periphyseon* and Patricia Stiernemann, who generously consulted the manuscript for me, informed me that the darkened and obscured features of the image of Christ are the result of oxidation caused by the use of white lead paint. The image in the *Clavis*, then, seems not to contribute to the topic of Eriugena's *Vision of God*. On the miniature, see É. JEAUNEAU, *A New Edition of Eriugena's "Periphyseon": La nouvelle édition du "Periphyseon"* (Turnhout, 1999), which contains a detailed analysis of the painting based on Eriugena's thought.

Nudity Lost and Regained in Eriugena's History of the World

KARL F. MORRISON

John Scottus Eriugena (ca. 810-ca. 870) flew like an exotic bird through the Carolingian landscape, a foreigner with learning of range and power that no one around him could match. We still have no way of tracing where he, or his extraordinary knowledge of theology and philosophy, came from, and no sense of the emotional fires that impelled him to work long and hard among “those who do philosophy piously”.¹ In his supreme achievement, a theological analysis of all nature, Eriugena told a complex story of the world. Eriugena re-worked the traditional Christian story of the creation, the fall of the human race into sin, and redemption into a dazzlingly unfamiliar account, full of bafflements, many of them deliberate, since he believed that truth was hidden, divine

¹ *Periphyseon*, 3. 17, ed. CCCM 163, p. 420 (PL 122, col. 675). References to CCCM are keyed to the now-standard edition by E.A. JEAUNEAU, *Iohannis Scotti seu Erivgenae Periphyseon*, 5 vols. (Brepols, 1996-2003: CCCM 161-165). On Eriugena's biography, see B. MCGINN, *The Growth of Mysticism* (New York, 1994), pp. 80-83; *Iohannis Scotti Erivgenae Carmina*, ed. M.W. HERREN (Dublin, 1993), pp. 2-6, 31, 46-50 (on Eriugena's strangely insecure grasp on the Greek language), 99 (on his “curiously eclectic” Greek vocabulary and its probable sources). See also J. MARENBON, “John Scottus and Carolingian theology: From the *De Praedestinatione*, its background and its critics, to the *Periphyseon*”, in: *Charles the Bald: Court and Kingdom*, ed. M.T. GIBSON and J.L. NELSON, 2nd edn. (Aldershot, 1990), pp. 303-325, arguing against the assessment of Eriugena as an isolated investigator, detached from the preoccupations and methods of contemporary Carolingian theologians. See also D. GANZ, “The debate on predestination”, in: *Charles the Bald: Court and Kingdom*, esp. pp. 292-293. I gathered materials for a study of Eriugena while a Carey Faculty Fellow in the Erasmus Institute at the University of Notre Dame. This publication gives me a chance to thank the Institute for its generous nurture.

mystery revealed through symbol, paradox, and enigma. For me, two co-ordinates make it possible to chart the trail through his labyrinth of mystery. They have to do with seeing the invisible.

One of the most striking twists Eriugena put on the Biblical creation story had to do with the creation of the human body. The book of Genesis recounts that God made the first human body (Adam's) with his own hands from the clay of the earth, and the second (Eve's) from one of Adam's ribs. According to Eriugena's philosophy, ultimate reality was entirely spiritual, detached from physical existence. God was spirit, and the "man" he made was spiritual – in fact, an idea in God's own mind. True to his Platonic heritage, Eriugena held that the authentic "man" was that idea in the divine intellect, perfectly simple (i.e., without parts) and immaterial. The creation first of Adam, and then of Eve, and the division of the sexes marked a descent from simplicity into multiplicity, and the creation of bodies marked a further descent into materialism. Physical existence came about as a result of sin. In mercy, God allowed Adam and Eve to make bodies so that they could bear the privations they would have to endure as a result of their expulsion from paradise. The "skins" they put on hid the nakedness of their authentic nature. And yet, God's whole plan was to restore the human race to its primal state, and that would occur when bodies were transformed into spirit and all multiplicity was resolved into a regained unity in God. From beginning to end, true humanity was visible only to the eyes of the mind, never to physical sight. When the great return was accomplished, the tunics of skin would be put off, and the true human nudity (that is, simplicity and sincerity) would be regained.² His story of the world moves between these two co-ordinates: the loss and the recovery of nudity.

Tellingly, Eriugena applied the same keynotes – the loss of nudity and its recovery – to what he regarded as the chief way to truth: theological reasoning. Here too, he played with the sublime joke that clothing the physical eye could see was masquerade: nudity, the authentic condition, was invisible. His method of thinking about God consisted of two reciprocating tools, like a hammer and an anvil. In order to speak about God, one makes positive statements: for example, "God is truth". This is the first tool, the "cataphatic", or positive, way. And yet, because God is uncircumscribed by any human categories and beyond comprehension and expression – best captured as "Nothing" – every positive statement about God has to be completed by its opposite: for example, "God is not truth" (i.e., "not truth" in any way human beings can think or say). This is the second tool, the negative or "apophatic" way. Eriugena wrote that God's divine being was naked. To shape the divine "Nothing" to their intellects, theo-

² *Periphyseon*, 4. 20, ed. CCCM 164, p. 568 (PL 122, col. 836-837). See below, n. 30.

logians clothed it in positive statements, but they also restored its nudity when they denied their affirmations. There was no contradiction between the statements “God is truth” and “God is not truth”, since they expressed two authentic but different ways of talking about the incomprehensible and ineffable. Eriugena believed that the negative was the closer to truth because it acknowledged that no human statement could capture the nakedness – the infinity and simplicity – of divine Being, and confessed ultimate human ignorance. As theologians used the two tools together, theology was a constant venture in “clothing and unclothing of the divine essence”.³

Eriugena’s theme of the loss and recovery of nudity, therefore, was central, not only to the story of the world, but also the theological method by which he constructed that story. We shall see that, in its mind-bending paradoxes, apparent contradictions that are actual truths, Eriugena also pressed it into service in his project of self-knowing, a venture of affirmation, denial, and ignorance of the naked truth invisible under coverings thrown over it by sin.

Evidently, Eriugena’s exploration of sacred history was a venture in self-knowledge. Everything he said about God, humanity, and the human race, filled in the puzzle of who and what he thought he was. Like so much else in his story, this primary urge to know the self ended in paradox, the affirmation of the denied, and ignorance. “I accept that I am, and that I know that I am”, Eriugena wrote, “and, at the same time, that I understand I do not know what I am”.⁴ In this paper, I reconstruct some of the trail Eriugena followed from the loss of nudity to its recovery, and what he discovered about himself.

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The great theme of John Scottus Eriugena’s *Periphyseon* (completed ca. 867) is the creation of the world. His monumental treatise amounts to an extended commentary on the first three chapters in Genesis. And yet, wrestling to unlock the meaning of Scripture, he recognized that his real subject was, not the event of creation or even the story about it. His real subject was the workings of his own mind as it apprehended the story, absorbed it, and rendered it into his

³ *Periphyseon*, 1. 14, ed. CCCM 161, pp. 194-197 (PL col. 461). W. OTTEN, *The Anthropology of Johannes Scottus Eriugena* (Leiden, 1991), pp. 54-58.

⁴ *Periphyseon*, 4. 9, ed. CCCM 164, p. 320 (PL 122, col. 776C). Cf. Eriugena’s argument that their respective incomprehensibilities were aspects of the relation of God to human nature as prototype to image. *Periphyseon*, 4. 7, ed. CCCM 164, pp. 298-301 (PL 122, col. 771): “*humana siquidem mens et seipsam novit et seipsam non novit...plus laudatur mens humana in sua ignorantia quam in sua scientia...*”.

commentary. He understood that the vital fact was that the narrative about Creation in Scripture and his interpretation were two separate things, separated by a great chasm of similar-dissimilarity. What bridged that chasm was the dynamic of knowing. This was his actual subject, and it was deeply autobiographical – indeed, an adventure in self-knowing – since “What I am”, he wrote, “is nothing other than the knowledge by which I know myself”.⁵

I suggest that the Delphic axiom, “Know thyself”, is the core around which Eriugena’s treatise spirals. The title of this paper indicates how complex an adventure of self-discovery Eriugena pursued, marking his trail with paradoxes and finally pressing by prayer beyond the limits of reason into the incomprehensible, ineffable, invisible void he called “Nothing”, a name for God. Triumphant as Eriugena was at this climax of his search, within sight of crossing over into God, his origin and goal, the very principles and method of his thinking undercut the rationales that defended the arts – visual and verbal – as instruments of spiritual enlightenment. His whole doctrine of how the mind worked militated against the objective, ensconced by the Apostle Paul once and for all in the western tradition, of progressing “through visible things to invisible (*per visibilia ad invisibilia*)”.⁶

In this paper, I shall indicate how Eriugena’s project of knowing himself led him from paradox to paradox, partly through his habitual use of the “two ways” of affirmation and denial in theology, and, at the end, to the negation both of the arts and of theology itself. The way of negation (“*negati affirmatio*”, “the affirmation of the denied”), he insisted, was more truthful than that of affirmation. Presumably to avoid the monotone boredom of soliloquy, Eriugena cast the *Periphyseon* as a dialogue between a teacher (the *Magister*, or *Nutritor*) and his disciple (*Alumnus*). Toward the end of the book, Eriugena inserted an unusual dramatic intermezzo, a prayer which served as a miniature synopsis of his adventure. I shall refer to that prayer in summarizing how he used theology to subvert itself, assimilating to his own rigorous thinking the urging of

⁵ *Periphyseon* 4. 9, ed. CCCM 164, p. 318 (PL 122, col. 776): “*non aliud sum et aliud scientia qua me scio*”.

⁶ The two key verses by St. Paul are Rm 1, 19-20 and Col 1, 15-16. They were commonly read in the light of a yet more explicit passage in Hbr 11, 3. The passage through visible to invisible realities was richly articulated by the Church Fathers, including Augustine, who made it the *leitmotif* of his pilgrimage, which he describes as a movement tracing similarities in dissimilars (the graded hierarchy of being) until he left the “region of dissimilitude” and returned to God. See, e.g. *Confessions* 7. 10. 16; 12. 28. 38 (Augustinus, *Confessionum libri XIII*, ed. L. VERHEIJEN (Turnhout, 1981: CCSL 27), pp. 103, 237-238). Related passages occur in *Confessions* 9. 10. 24; 10. 6. 9-10; 10. 34. 51-53; and 11. 4. 6 (ed. VERHEIJEN, pp. 147-148, 159-160, 183-184, 197).

Dionysius the Areopagite to a state of unknowing from which he could “abandon the senses and intellectual activities, things sensible and invisible, and all being and non-being, and ascend into the blinding darkness of Light Inaccessible”.⁷

At the outset, I stress that Eriugena’s paradoxes were all paradoxes of immaterial, ever-moving process. Truth, for him, was not in the material cosmos, “the nature of this visible machine”,⁸ but in the supernatural process that impelled it from origin to destination. This was the Archimedean point he found to overturn the world of *trompe l’oeil* representational art, with its illusions of fixed material forms, the point from which he departed beyond sensory and intelligible forms to lose himself in the invisible.

1. The Guiding Paradox: Stable Mobility

When they begin to spin their tales, Greek storytellers may catch the imagination of their listeners by saying, “I throw three [or four or five] golden balls into the air”. As those golden balls glitter in the imagination, the storyteller will name them, each one a different character in the tale. It is a charming way to introduce bystanders to the figures and the plot that the narrator will juggle for them. As Eriugena begins this story, he tosses four golden balls into the air and names them. His theme is process, nature (*natura*) doing what nature does (*natura naturans*). There are four characters in his story. The first is God as the First Cause, the cause of all, things that are and things that are not. This actor Eriugena names “nature uncreated and creating (*increatea et creans*)”. The second character is the causes created by God in the Word, by which all things were made. Eriugena names the second actor “nature created and creating (*creata et creans*)”. Following in logical descending sequence from the first two, the third character is the world of change, everything created by the created causes and known in transition by generation, times, and places. Eriugena has saved a surprise for his fourth golden ball. For what appeared to be a descending chain of being from God to changeable mortal creatures of time and place is actually a cycle of egress and return. His fourth and last golden ball is God, who was also the first. God is both the point of departure and the destination. As the point of return, God is “uncreated and uncreating (*increatea et increans*)” nature. Eriugena whets the curiosity of his listeners by admitting that the fourth *natura* is a category of impossibilities, of things that cannot be.

⁷ *Periphyseon*, 4. 5, ed. CCCM 164, p. 246 (PL col. 759).

⁸ *Periphyseon*, 5. 23, ed. CCCM 165, p. 402 (PL 122, col. 902).

It is his way of introducing one central mystery of his story, the non-being of God.⁹

The startling fact about his theme and the four leading characters is that they are all the most invisible of subjects. They are all immaterial process, moving components in one universal, dynamic cycle. Eriugena's project required him to place human existence – his own thought and work – in the framework of *natura naturans*. Because he was convinced that the known object was “made” in the knowing subject, the project of self-knowing absorbed the dynamic cyclical movement of nature naturing, one reason Eriugena was able to name the soul paradoxically “stable mobility”, a name that he also applied to God.¹⁰

The first point of attack was the human body. What access to the immaterial – the invisible and inexpressible – do creatures of flesh and blood have? Human physiology had to be part of how people thought about knowing, even for those who did not accept Aristotle's proposition that “there is nothing in the intellect that is not first in the senses”. Even for them, the body was key to knowing by virtue of sensory perceptions recorded and filed away as “images” in the memory. Some writers regarded these memorial images as barriers to be overcome, as did Evagrius Ponticus, advocating passivity of prayer, when he urged the devout to empty their souls of everything – all words, images, thoughts – to make a void that God could fill. Yet, no active expression of thought was possible without images in the memory. Directed by reason, the imagination which formed those thoughts and their expressions, was the repository of truth. The imagination translated by analogy between visible and invisible, between utterable and ineffable. By analogy, it translated what was uncircumscribed and formless into representations circumscribed by bodily senses.

Because reason could fail and imagination careen wildly into fantasies, some theologians, including Augustine, took exquisite care to defend material

⁹ *Periphyseon*, 1. 1, ed. CCCM 161, pp. 3–4 (PL 122, cols. 441–442); 2. 1, ed. CCCM 162, pp. 138–143 (PL 122, cols. 525–526).

¹⁰ *Periphyseon* 1. 4, ed. CCCM 161, p. 6 (PL 122, col. 444); 2. 23, ed. CCCM 162, pp. 314–316 (PL 122, col. 571). See also *Periphyseon*, 2. 23, ed. CCCM 162, p. 312 (PL 122, col. 570): “*siquidem, ut tu ipse intelligis, non aliud est nostrae naturae esse, et aliud moveri; essentia enim eius est motus circa Deum et creaturam stabilis et mobilis status*”. Eriugena returns to this theme in *Periphyseon*, 5. 20, ed. CCCM 165, p. 366 (PL 122, col. 892): “*Miror quare hoc interrogas, dum tu ipse paulo superius incunctanter definieris finem mundi suas videlicet aeternas causa in Verbo Dei aeternaliter et incommutabiliter subsistentes, et in superioribus inter nos confectum est, in omnibus, quae in motu vel in statu sunt, vel certe, ut ita dicam, in mobili statu et in motu stabili non aliud esse principium, aliud finem, sed unum et id ipsum*”.

creation as a work of God's goodness. Had not God created the human body with his own fingers from inert clay? Because, rightly directed, the bodily senses witnessed to the same origin and truth, authors later than Augustine also believed that the evidence of each reinforced that of the others, as, for example pictures could serve as "the eyes of what is said".¹¹

In some passages, Eriugena accepts the bodily senses as essential to communication, but his greater objective was to discount them in an unusual and arresting way, summed up in his paradox, "man is an animal; man is not an animal".

The process of human knowing had cycles of its own, all of which were subsumed in nature's universal return to God. I shall now briefly indicate what those cycles were.

The sentence "what I am is nothing other than the knowledge by which I know myself",¹² contains more than a whiff of solipsism's vicious circle. How do we know ourselves, since the soul is invisible and incomprehensible? Eriugena's answer is that we know it by what it does. Artists form their projects in their minds, and then realize them in material form outside the mind.¹³ In the same way, all human beings know themselves from the inner movements by which the mind forms ideas and then by other kinds of movements articulates them into outward signs, words, or gestures. Thus, the soul is silent while it shouts and invisible while it is seen. It is incorporeal in itself, and incorporated in the signs it makes, which Eriugena strikingly calls "conveyances (*vehicula*)". By them, the soul communicates with itself and with others. For Eriugena includes words and, evidently, works of visual arts in the large category of "various figures comprehensible to the senses". He speaks of these "conveyances", as though they were carriages in which one soul was drawn to others. When the vehicle entered the sensory perceptions of others, the soul abandoned it, mingled with their inmost hearts and minds, and became one with them.¹⁴

Elsewhere, Eriugena refined his idea of how communications worked to include mental images, which he called *phantasiae*. He did not trust them, tools as they might be of demonic trickery. Bodily sensation, he wrote, was fixed in man to be a kind of messenger between sensory and intelligible faculties; its

¹¹ Theodore the Studite, *On the Holy Icons*, Second Refutation, c. 19, tr. C.P. ROTH (Crestwood, NY, 1981), p. 55. Cf. the use of inscriptions on icons, *ibid.*, Second Refutation, c. 17, p. 52.

¹² Above, n. 5.

¹³ *Periphyseon*, 2. 23, ed. CCCM 162, p. 340 (PL 122, col. 577).

¹⁴ *Periphyseon*, 3. 4, ed. CCCM 163, pp. 240-242 (PL 122, col. 633).

tools of mediation were mental images formed from sensory data. Logically, knowledge by means of those images (*phantasiae*) were always shadows of actual material objects. The “vehicles” framed to convey *phantasiae* – whether words, gestures, or visual beauties – were shadows invented to spark libidinous delight in material beauty, carnal lust and pleasure.¹⁵

As we saw, Eriugena held that, when communication passed from one person to another, the soul of the sender left its sensory vehicle when it reached the perception of recipients and became one with their souls. This is how he could maintain that the understanding of knower and known became one. “When I understand what you understand”, he wrote, “I become your understanding (*intellectus*) and, in some ineffable way, I am made in you”. By the process of knowing, “two intellects become one. When you and I understand each other, I am created in you, and you in me”.¹⁶

Eriugena might well have developed his doctrines about “various figures comprehensible to the senses” into a theory of signs and communication. And yet, that would have been a needless excursion into material forms, a detour from his project of self-knowing in process; for he was convinced that the senses, and therefore communication by means of the senses, had everything to do with sinful, fallen humanity, the vicious circle of human minds closed in upon themselves. He looked higher for authentic humanity and for a redemptive cycle of self-knowing.

Augustine of Hippo described how he and his mother, Monica, jointly ascended into the presence of eternal Wisdom. They traversed the entire cosmic hierarchy, beginning with material things, moving inward into their own souls and then beyond sense and intellect to Wisdom itself.¹⁷ Eriugena’s doctrines excluded this kind of passage through visible forms to invisible; for, while he recognized sensuality and intellect as components of humanity in this world, his whole effort was to escape from sensuality into wordless, imageless contemplation of energies or events in progress: i.e., of dynamic movement.

Eriugena’s thought about communication through the senses, by “vehicles” such as words and pictures, turned on that decisive moment in Genesis when God made Eve from Adam’s rib. It was “divine irony” when God said, “It is not good for man to be alone. Let us make a helpmeet like him” (Gn 2, 18). Eriugena found a double irony in God’s words. First, God would make a woman

¹⁵ *Periphyseon*, 4, 23, ed. CCCM 164, p. 626 (PL 122, col. 851). On the deceptiveness of words by which Satan seduced Eve and Adam, see *Periphyseon*, 4, 21, ed. CCCM 164, pp. 572–593 (PL 122, cols. 838–842).

¹⁶ *Periphyseon*, 4, 9, ed. CCCM 164, pp. 336–339 (PL 122, col. 780).

¹⁷ Augustine of Hippo, *Confessions*, 9, 10, 2–26 (ed. VERHEIJEN, pp. 147–148).

like Adam, fragile and ridiculous, chasing after worldly lusts. Thus, mankind would decline from simplicity, the mark of God's image, into multiplicity through carnal intercourse, like pigs. Even, the woman, Eriugena wrote, was figuratively the bodily senses, delighted and deceived by mental images (*phantasiae*) of material things. Adam, the man, represented the mind, corrupted by wrongly consenting to the physical senses and thereby cut off from contemplation of inward Truth.¹⁸ Eriugena recognized that Adam and Eve were seduced by sensory means – by words –, into human, or diabolic superstitions, and that, to return to their pristine state, they would have to be purged of every carnal sense and superstition.¹⁹ Until that return, the senses continued to link the exterior, physical world with the mind, jeopardizing the whole project of self-knowing. In the search for truth, they swamped the reason with deceptive forms, countless as the stars. They kindled irrational passions from which came the Serpent in the Garden of Eden, seducing human beings by libidinous delight in material beauty, diverting them from their natural goal. As a result of the senses, human judgment was almost always erroneous.²⁰ As Otten put it, in her now-classic study of Eriugena's anthropology, sin turned human "rational abilities into a caricature of their original selves" by opening the floodgates of sensuality, and left them disoriented, deceptive, and prey to the inadequacies of language.²¹

How do we know ourselves as stable mobilities? Eriugena's exploration begins with one paradox and ends with another. It begins with the paradox of stable mobility itself and ends with the double assertion derived from it: "Man is an animal; man is not an animal".²² At this point, his application of the positive and negative ways to self-knowing becomes overt. He applied them to human nature, the image, for the same reason they were applied to God, the prototype: the incomprehensibility of the subject. The human mind both does not know itself and knows itself. It does not know what it is, but it knows that it is. Likewise, Eriugena argued, God himself does not understand what he is,

¹⁸ *Periphyseon*, 4. 22, 23, ed. CCCM 164, pp. 554, 604-613, 638 (PL 122, cols. 846-847, 854). On the phrase "divine irony", see OTTEN, *The Anthropology of Johannes Scottus Eriugena*, pp. 167-168.

¹⁹ *Periphyseon*, 4. 21, ed. CCCM 164, pp. 576-578 (PL 122, col. 839).

²⁰ *Periphyseon*, 4. 10, ed. CCCM 164, p. 352 (PL 122, col. 784).

²¹ OTTEN, *The Anthropology of Johannes Scottus Eriugena*, pp. 60, 62-63, 66, 141, 195, 209.

²² *Periphyseon*, 4. 5, ed. CCCM 164, pp. 216-128 (PL 122, col. 752): "*Homo animal est; homo animal non est*". See OTTEN, *The Anthropology of Johannes Scottus Eriugena*, pp. 135-137. As Otten points out, this paradox exemplifies how Eriugena applied the "two ways", cataphatic and apophatic, to human nature as well as to God.

since he is beyond all being and comprehension. He is ignorant of his own Being, which he infers at second hand, by the works of Creation in which he manifests himself, manifestations which Eriugena calls “theophanies”.²³ Indeed, unfathomable ignorance of what we are – ignorance beyond all understanding – is the surest proof that we are like God, containing within ourselves the whole substance of Creation in its boundless plenitude.²⁴ Eriugena’s adventure in self-knowing drove him well beyond sensory knowledge.

As Eriugena reconstructed the story of human origins, individual self-knowing was not possible in the primordial state of human nature. For then, there were no individuals, but only one idea of humanity in the mind of God; and there was one general knowledge of all, known by God alone. Knowledge of self came later, when sin intruded dissimilarity between God (the prototype) and his image (humanity). Humanity’s descent from simplicity into multiplicity, and eventually into carnality followed; and with this progressive dissimilarity came a deep ignorance of God and of authentic human nature.²⁵ God created Adam according to a template in his mind, analogous to the conception of some work in the mind of an artist. That template in God’s mind was, and always will be, authentic humanity. Therefore, as Eriugena put it, “Man is a certain intellectual idea eternally made in the Divine Mind”.²⁶ This primal abstraction had no animality in it. When the Lord created Adam, he conveyed no animal nature or physical body, and therefore no senses, Eriugena dismissed the conception that God made man a microcosm of the whole hierarchy of life, vegetal, animal, and rational, with its array of fixed forms of life in material shapes. Indeed, he maintained, mortality and animality came about by human action. The division into male and female sexes anticipated the loss of paradise. Man made himself foolish and imprudent, and, when seduced by the Serpent, he brought about his own downfall by lusting for sensory, transitory things.²⁷

²³ *Periphyseon*, 2. 23, ed. CCCM 162, p. 340 (PL 122, col. 577); 4. 8, ed. CCCM 164, p. 308 (PL 122, col. 775): Among of the orders of angels, “*nulla ignorantia inest, praeter illam divinarum tenebrarum quae superat omnem intellectum*”. On instances of God’s ignorance, see *Periphyseon* 2. 28, ed. CCCM 164, pp. 298–301 (PL 122, cols. 593, 596); 4. 7, ed. CCCM 164, pp. 298–301 (PL 122, col. 771).

²⁴ *Periphyseon*, 4. 7, ed. CCCM 164, pp. 298–301 (PL 122, col. 771): “*plus laudatur mens humana in sua ignorantia quam in sua scientia*”.

²⁵ *Periphyseon*, 4. 9, ed. CCCM 164, pp. 322–330 (PL 122, cols. 776–777).

²⁶ *Periphyseon*, 4. 7, ed. CCCM 164, p. 284 (PL 122, col. 768): “*Homo est notio quaedam intellectualis in mente divina aeternaliter facta*”. See also *Periphyseon*, 3. 8, ed. CCCM 163, p. 270 (PL 122, col. 640): “*Nihil enim aliud nos sumus, in quantum sumus, nisi ipsae rationes nostrae aeternaliter in Deo substitutae*”.

²⁷ *Periphyseon*, 5. 20, 37, ed. CCCM 165, pp. 374, 828–830 (PL 122, cols. 895, 1013).

Eriugena took great pains to clarify his position. He did not want to teach, he wrote, that human nature was entirely disembodied in paradise, before it sinned. Far from it. The Creator made our souls and bodies in paradise at the same time, but the bodies were "heavenly, spiritual, such as are to be after the resurrection. The gross, mortal, corruptible bodies with which we are now burdened, beyond all doubt came, not by nature, but by sin".²⁸

The sin of Adam and Eve superimposed the material forms of animality upon the immaterial stable mobility that God had created. Animality and the senses could be called an entirely human invention, hatched and imposed at the moment when Adam and Eve devised clothes to hide their nudity, putting on sensuality as they put on fig leaves, as, in the same way, our bodies cover our souls with shadows of ignorance and repel knowledge of truth. Although Scripture says that God made garments of skin for Adam and Eve and clothed them (Gn 3, 21), Eriugena insists, the meaning must be that, for the uses of this fragile and transitory life, God allowed and admonished mortal man to make his own mortal flesh, for all that immortal God makes is immortal.²⁹ The clothes, fig leaves or tunics of skin, were signs that Adam and Eve had spurned the beauty of their primal simplicity, part of their likeness to God, and had abandoned their natural simplicity for manifold and delusive sensual beauty. In the final return of all things into God, the tunics of skin would be put off and nudity (meaning the simplicity of authentic human nature) would be recovered.³⁰

Eriugena emphatically taught that, while animal sensuality came about as a consequence of sin, it was, not a punishment, but rather a mercy of God. Mankind lost the natural felicity it was made to enjoy, but the substance of its original nature was undefiled, and the beauty of the soul, unimpaired.³¹ It would stagger the reason, Eriugena wrote, to say that divine justice punished what it had made, since everything it made was good, nor could evil ever come of good.³² In his grand scheme of the world's universal return to God, he argued that God intended to renew the image that sin had deformed by imposing upon the soul likeness to irrational, mortal creatures. God intended to make the human race worthy of returning to the Tree of Knowledge and living there forever, of returning to conformity with the "intellectual idea eternally made in

²⁸ *Periphyseon*, 2. 23, ed. CCCM 162, p. 318 (*PL* 122, col. 571).

²⁹ *Periphyseon*, 2. 26, ed. CCCM 162, pp. 79, 368 (*PL* 122, cols. 583-584).

³⁰ *Periphyseon*, 4. 20, ed. CCCM 164, p. 568 (*PL* 122, cols. 836-837); 4. 23, 26, ed. CCCM 164, pp. 602, 662 (*PL* 122, cols. 845, 859).

³¹ *Periphyseon*, 4. 5, ed. CCCM 164, pp. 244-255 (*PL* 122, cols. 759-761); 5. 2, ed. CCCM 165, p. 6 (*PL* 122, cols. 802-803).

³² *Periphyseon*, 5. 28, 30, ed. CCCM 165, pp. 519, 542 (*PL* 122, col. 933, 939).

the Divine Mind".³³ Physical bodies were not realities, but, like echoes and shadows, they were passing images and reflections of actually subsisting things. God wished to purify human nature, as a creative process, by removing accretions of material forms, carnality, that sin had imposed upon it, and to reunify it with its authentic self and with its Creator.³⁴

Eriugena's paradoxes of process had nothing at all to do with mental or artistic representations of physical objects. What counted for him was the interior vision of movement – indeed, of being as dynamic. Thus, he said, Adam saw his own nakedness after the fall in the same way as he saw the animals before the fall: that is, only with the simple eye of inner knowing and of the mind, without the help of physical or mortal sensation. In our post-lapsarian state, the light of theological propositions falls on our inner eyes more clearly sometimes than others, and the eyes of our heart can lose sight of the tree of life and the way to it. Yet, the return moves by inward "seeing".³⁵

The vicious cycle of sensory knowledge was one thing; the cycle of redemption, another.

2. *The Paradox Of Separation: "Man Is An Animal. Man Is Not An Animal"*

In the world, there were two parts in man, the image of God in which man was made for honour, a creative energy or process, and the animal, the likeness to irrational, mortal creatures, in matter and measurable shapes, that man had brought upon himself for shame. The two would be brought into unity when redemption was accomplished. Until then, they would stand apart, the image which God made and the animality which Adam and Eve made. But, when the return of all things into God was consummated, they would be brought into harmony and the apocalyptic paradox would be vindicated: "The image is complete in the animal and the animal is complete in the image".³⁶

³³ *Periphyseon*, 4. 5, ed. CCCM 164, pp. 250-251 (PL 122, col. 701); 5. 2, ed. CCCM 165, pp. 252-255 (PL 122, col. 865).

³⁴ *Periphyseon*, 5. 6, 25, ed. CCCM 165, pp. 278-280, 448 (PL 122, cols. 871, 914).

³⁵ *Periphyseon*, 3. 5, ed. CCCM 163, pp. 250-252 (PL 122, col. 635); 4. 19, ed. CCCM 164, pp. 560-563 (PL 122, col. 835); 5. 2, ed. CCCM 165, pp. 8-9 (PL 122, col. 865). Cf. Eriugena's comment that, when Jesus vanished from the physical sight of the Apostles, he did not withdraw from the place where they were, but rather hid himself from their physical eyes by virtue of the subtlety of his spiritual body. *Periphyseon*, 5. 19, ed. CCCM 165, p. 374 (PL 122, cols. 894-895).

³⁶ *Periphyseon*, 4. 5, ed. CCCM 164, p. 252 (PL 122, col. 701): "Non te igitur moveat, quod de humana natura dictum est, totam in se ipsa ubique esse, et imaginem in animali totam et

Pending that consummation, as we saw, Eriugena supplied his more comprehensive paradox drawn from the reciprocal action of the positive and negative ways: "Man is an animal; man is not an animal".

The second point of attack was the incarnation of Christ. Slightly earlier than Eriugena and in another society, Theodore the Studite (759-826) explained how the soul could pass from a material object – an icon – to the immaterial reality of God. Humanity, he wrote, was circumscribed, tangible and formed. Remove the circumscriptions imposed by the body, he said, and you remove humanity. Divinity is uncircumscribed, intangible and formless. Christ was both circumscribed in the flesh, and uncircumscribed in divinity. In him, by a mind-defying mystery, divinity was circumscribed by the flesh.

Therefore, Christ could be depicted in the physical materials and dimensions of icons, and, in them, the invisible was seen. This is why one can say that an icon is Christ (or that the portrait of an emperor is the emperor.) Abstract, mental contemplation was not adequate to achieve salvation. Theodore took great care to stress the physical reality of Christ's body before the Resurrection (demonstrated by his circumcision, his eating and drinking and speaking, as well as by the wounds of his passion), and afterwards. Although his risen and glorified body lacked solidity, it was the same body he had assumed, and it still ate food and could be touched, heard, and seen.

The "concorporality" of believers with Christ was the means by which they, who were one body with him, were both circumscribed in the flesh and deified. For, by the incarnation, God had condescended to humble himself, stamping his invisible and uncircumscribed image in human flesh.³⁷ Though Theodore the Studite did not say so in his defense of icons, the doctrine of the resurrection of the flesh depended on the real concorporality of believers and Christ.

Eriugena departed from this doctrine as dramatically as he did from the doctrine that God created the human body and the physical senses as tools of knowing. He did this by way of explicating his paradox that the animal would be complete in the image and the image in the animal.

Even the animality of man preserved the human faculty of reason, absent from all other animals. Thus, Eriugena argued, it might seem logical to move from the paradox, "Man is an animal, man is not an animal", to another: "Man is a rational animal; man is an irrational animal". To the contrary, the second set

animal in imagine totum?" The image of God persists whether man sins or not. *Periphyseon*, 4. 5, ed. CCCM 164, p. 242 (PL 122, col. 758).

³⁷ Theodore the Studite, *On the Holy Icons*, First Disputation, cc. 2, 7, 12; Second Disputation, c. 47; Third Disputation, A. cc. 4, 10, 28-29, 36, 39, 40 (tr. ROTH, pp. 21, 26-27, 33, 73, 79, 81, 88-89, 91, 92, 94-95).

of propositions is merely contradictory. Only the first proposition ("Man is an animal") can be true. You can say, "Man is an animal", but not "An animal is man". The authentic paradox – "Man is an animal; man is not an animal" – expresses a contradiction inherent specifically in the human condition. Animality brought with it sensual, perishing bodies, debasement by procreation from two sexes in the fashion of brute animals, physical needs for punishment and shelter. Invented by man and imposed on the nature, the stable mobility, God created, it brought forgetfulness of self and creator and carnal passions. By it, man fell from the honour of the divine image to the disgrace of likeness to cattle,³⁸ both the image of God and carnal, until, when the universal return to God is consummated, what is animal is transformed into spirit.³⁹

This consummation is hidden from those who are still circumscribed by their material existence. What they know comes to them through the bodily senses, which conveys images of sensible objects to the mind. The mind sorts and renders those images, or *phantasiae*, into intelligible order, informed by abstract principles derived from reason, principles which were themselves manifestations of God, or theophanies. Even endowed with reason, the mind could draw from the memory images of things embedded there by sensory perceptions. This further class of images, one step more distant from physical reality than *phantasiae*, Eriugena called *phantasmata*, images of images. From all these false imaginings, the rational soul engineered its own shameful death when it thought up "monstrous and abominable idols about the Creator of all".⁴⁰

Bound to the senses, the soul remained banished from paradise, tied to material forms, incapable of self-knowing. Since "I am the knowledge by which I know myself", the "vehicles" such as words, signs and gesture by which the soul communicated through the senses left it incapable of regaining its dignity as image of God, and the natural felicity it was made to possess.

At one hard moment in the dialogue, Eriugena had the Master pray that God, who had given nature, would also give grace. Without him, those seeking him would remain in the shadows of their own ignorance. "Show yourself to those who seek nothing but you. Tear apart the clouds of vain *phantasiae* which do not allow the apex of the mind to gaze at you in the way you permit yourself, The Invisible, to be seen by those desiring it to see your face".⁴¹ God alone

³⁸ *Periphyseon*, 4. 5, 6, 9, 14, ed. CCCM 164, pp. 252-261, 324, 452 (PL 122, col. 760-761, 761-762, 777, 807-808); 5. 16, ed. CCCM 165, pp. 456-458 (PL 122, col. 916).

³⁹ *Periphyseon*, 4. 5, ed. CCCM 164, pp. 230-233 (PL 122, cols. 755-757).

⁴⁰ *Periphyseon*, 2. 23, ed. CCCM 162, pp. 306-310, 332-335, 338-343 (PL 122, cols. 569-578); 3. 9, 12, 36 163, ed. CCCM 163, pp. 284 ("monstra abhominandaque idola de creatore omnium cogitare"), 354-356, 648 (PL 122, cols. 643, 659, 731).

⁴¹ *Periphyseon*, 3. 1, ed. CCCM 163, p. 312 (PL 122, col. 650).

could open sense and intellect and bring to light the hidden things of darkness, the processes that were reality. What use, the Master asked, is external (i.e., sensory) conviction without inward illumination?⁴²

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Thus far, we have discovered a practical reason why Eriugena abandoned works of art as ways by which to pass through visible to invisible things. He considered the material body an accretion, made by human beings in an act of primal disobedience against God and added by them to the spiritual nature God had created in his image and likeness. Eriugena assimilated as his own a statement by Gregory of Nyssa.⁴³ Authentic human nature remained unimpaired by sin, Gregory had written, much as, in individuals, the body grows and shrinks as it moves through the life cycle, changeable as a garment, but the form (i.e., the soul) wearing it remains unchangeable as costumes shift.⁴⁴

For all ventures of knowing, above all self-knowing, the body presented great obstacles. According to Eriugena's theories of perception, all the senses – including those of sight and hearing – worked by direct physical contact.⁴⁵ Bodily sensation was where falsehood and empty *phantasiae* held sway, where seductions by sensual pleasures and lusts continued to allure souls into sin, as the Serpent had seduced first Eve and then Adam. Indeed, no other part of human nature, apart from the “exterior” senses of the body, received falsehood. Through it, the interior sense, reason – even intellect itself – was most often deceived and cut off from contemplation of inward truth.⁴⁶

“Αἰσθησις”, Eriugena said, was part of the expulsion from paradise. It was Eve's heel, which God told the Serpent he would bite. The heel was “phantasies of sensory things” and love (*amor*) of them.⁴⁷ To escape seduction by the exterior senses – through words and other signs – human nature needed to be purged of every carnal sense and superstition.⁴⁸ Even as he spoke the sentence of expulsion, God promised the restitution of human nature into its pristine

⁴² *Periphyseon*, 3. 11, ed. CCCM 163, p. 342 (PL 122, col. 657).

⁴³ *On the Making of Man*, 27. 3, tr. in: *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, 2nd series, 5, ed. P. SCHAFF and H. WACE (Grand Rapids, MI, 1988), p. 418.

⁴⁴ *Periphyseon*, 5. 6, ed. CCCM 165, p. 282 (PL 122, col. 872).

⁴⁵ *Periphyseon*, 4. 23, ed. CCCM 164, 638-643, 660 (PL 122, cols. 854, 859).

⁴⁶ *Periphyseon*, 4. 16, 23, ed. CCCM 164, pp. 526, 638-642 (PL 122, cols. 826, 854).

⁴⁷ *Periphyseon*, 4. 24, ed. CCCM 164, pp. 636, 644 (PL 122, cols. 853, 855).

⁴⁸ *Periphyseon*, 4. 21, ed. CCCM 164, p. 578 (PL 122, col. 839).

condition, a restoration of the peace of creation within itself and with its Creator. God spoke his promise when he said that the woman (*αἰσθησις*) was to be ruled by the man (*mens* or *intellectus*).⁴⁹ Until that return the soul would be caught in the vicious circle of irrational motion, though it was made to enjoy reason.⁵⁰

The redemptive cycle itself offered additional reasons for Eriugena's discount on works of art, and I now turn to them. As he worked out the pattern of universal restoration, Eriugena began from the principle that "the end of every motion is its beginning". He collected many examples from physical nature – the cyclical courses of sun, moon, and other heavenly bodies, recurrent seasons and tides – to give credence to his argument that the proposition stated an actual law of motion. He asserted that the liberal arts too were resolved into their origins (music into the tone, astronomy into the atom, grammar and rhetoric into words).⁵¹

Likewise, Eriugena argued, since human nature had never been corrupted by sin, the resurrection of the dead would occur by natural powers, even as hair and nails, once cut, grew again; for the vital force that never abandoned the substance of human bodies, even when they dissolved in death, would return them to their origin, changing body into spirit.⁵² All human nature would return to the primordial causes, which were always and changelessly in God; the substance of things would not perish, but return into a better state.⁵³ Everything created naturally in man would necessarily remain eternally whole and incorrupt. For divine justice would never allow to perish anything it had made by virtue of the very fact that divine justice itself had made it.

When sin came, it came, not because nature sinned, but because perverse will had moved irrationally against rational nature. Just as no wise person wished to err, Eriugena commented, human nature did not wish to sin by acting against reason. Therefore, the Creator did not wish to punish human nature. Instead, he added to what he had made in such a way that it could be purged of the sin that had come about by a perverse will and the seductive persuasion of the Serpent.⁵⁴ In expelling Adam and Eve, he set a Cherubim with a flaming sword at the gate of paradise. The Cherubim represented what the human race would have to accomplish in order to return to paradise and know itself again:

⁴⁹ *Periphyseon*, 4. 23, ed. CCCM 164, pp. 644-647 (PL 122, cols. 855-856), quoting Gn 3, 16.

⁵⁰ *Periphyseon*, 5. 7, ed. CCCM 165, p. 290 (PL 122, col. 874): "*irrationabili motu volvitur, quae ratione frui comparabatur*".

⁵¹ *Periphyseon*, 5. 3, 4-5, ed. CCCM 165, pp. 256-259, 264-280 (PL 122, cols. 866, 868-871).

⁵² *Periphyseon*, 5. 23, ed. CCCM 165, pp. 390-400 (PL 122, cols. 899-901).

⁵³ *Periphyseon*, 5. 8, ed. CCCM 165, p. 296 (PL 122, col. 876).

⁵⁴ *Periphyseon*, 4. 2, ed. CCCM 164, pp. 250-253 (PL 122, col. 760).

a manifold of knowledge and an outpouring of wisdom. The Cherubim at the gate of paradise was a sign that human nature, by pursuing the study of wisdom, would be purged in deed and in knowledge; and it was also a sign that divine mercy, more than divine vengeance, had acted in expelling man from paradise.⁵⁵

It is tempting to seize upon this passage as indicating some idea that human beings could work out their own salvation. Indeed, Eriugena quoted a passage in which Maximus the Confessor refers to man as “the workshop of all” after God, because all things are in him, and the “mean” uniting spiritual and corporal.⁵⁶ And yet, in Eriugena’s scheme of things, human knowledge and diligence were not adequate to achieve salvation.

Even as a natural cycle, the return was achieved through an exceptional divine intervention, one event in two acts: the incarnation and the resurrection of Christ. An essential part of Christ’s resurrection was the transformation of the human body, man’s animality, into spirit, and thus its restoration.⁵⁷ Humanity perished except in the Wisdom and Word of God, where it remained incorruptible. The restoration of defiled humanity came through the mediation of Christ, the word, in whom all creation was contained and in whose resurrection humanity was transformed into divinity. In Adam, the human race was divided into male and female. In Christ, the sexes were reunited. The risen Christ had neither sex or comprehensible form. His humanity was one with his uncircumscribed divinity. What he accomplished in himself at his own resurrection, he would as mediator bring about for all human nature, on the last day in the general resurrection converting into spirit everything that human nature after sin had gathered to itself from this material world. The whole human race will be redeemed in Christ, and return to the heavenly Jerusalem.⁵⁸ With the transformation of animality into spirit, the animal would be complete in the image and the image complete in the animal.

After the resurrection, there would be no bodies of any kind, no physical paradise or hell for them to inhabit. Physical limits on recognizing the divine in what we see will be removed. Eriugena found teachings to the contrary ludicrous. He was thunderstruck to find them in writings of some Church Fathers who taught the physical resurrection of the dead. Perhaps, he thought, these Fathers had deliberately concealed the truth, trimming what they wrote to suit

⁵⁵ *Periphyseon*, 4. 2, ed. CCCM 164, pp. 248-250 (*PL* 122, col. 760); 5. 2, ed. CCCM 165, pp. 248-253 (*PL* 122, col. 864).

⁵⁶ *Periphyseon*, 5. 20, ed. CCCM 165, p. 368 (*PL* 122, col. 893).

⁵⁷ *Periphyseon*, 2. 45, ed. CCCM 162, pp. 318-319 (*PL* 122, cols. 571-572).

⁵⁸ *Periphyseon*, 4. 9, 20, ed. CCCM 164, pp. 324-327, 568, 662 (*PL* 122, col. 777, 836); 5. 20, ed. CCCM 165, pp. 362-377 (*PL* 122, cols. 892-895).

the capacities of simple believers; "for weak eyes can not bear the brightness of light". Perhaps, they had wanted to avoid angry denunciations from those who could only see that, if there were no bodies or physical existence in place and time, nothing would be left.⁵⁹ Nutritor confessed that he himself, misled by his carnal senses, had come dangerously close to falling into the pit of ignorance and dying there. He knew from experience that the carnal senses could form the most detestable creatures, and that the soul could chase after them as though they were truths.⁶⁰

Natural circularity prevailed in the fact that the causes of all things were in the Word, and that the end of the world was the return of all things to the Word in which they had been made.⁶¹ Nothing was in the world that was not comprehended in human nature. By the incarnation, Christ assumed human nature in which the whole world subsists. By the resurrection, he exalted human nature above all things visible and invisible, above all heavenly powers, uniting it to his Deity, thus saving it all, entire in himself and in the whole human race.⁶² Eriugena held up a glorious vision of human nature in Christ, the apex and consummation of God's creative act. In it, he wrote, all creation was established and joined, and through it, all creation would return to its origins and be saved.⁶³

In his occasional poetry, Eriugena often evoked the image of Jesus crucified, bathing the Cross in a wave of blood, and he was capable of writing graphically of the holocaust of Christ's body burned by the fire of suffering on the altar of the Cross.⁶⁴ In the *Periphyseon*, he indicated how alien that intensely carnal image was from his philosophical doctrines. Jesus's risen and glorified body is beyond time and place, without form, confined by no physical capacities or characteristics, such as sex. Indeed, even before the resurrection, the humanity of Christ, the "perfect man", was like a garment clothing the divine Word. His physical sufferings were like blood spattered on the garment

⁵⁹ *Periphyseon*, 5. 36, 38, ed. CCCM 165, pp. 724-726, 838-838 (PL 122, col. 986, 1015).

⁶⁰ *Periphyseon*, 3. 10, ed. CCCM 163, p. 312 (PL 122, col. 650); 5. 36, ed. CCCM 165, pp. 722-730, 738, 746-748 (PL 122, col. 985-988, 990, 992); 5. 37, ed. CCCM 165, p. 838 (PL 122, col. 986). See, additionally, Eriugena's comments on the use and interpretation of physical metaphors in Scripture, *Periphyseon*, 1. 64-68, ed. CCCM 161, pp. 400-416 (PL 122, cols. 509, 513). B. MCGINN, "The originality of Eriugena's spiritual exegesis", in: *Iohannes Scottus Eriugena: The Bible and Hermeneutics*, ed. G. VAN RIEL, C. STEEL and J. MCEVOY (Leuven, 1996), p. 71. See also above, n. 59 and below, nn. 123-124.

⁶¹ *Periphyseon*, 5. 20, ed. CCCM 165, pp. 364-366 (PL 122, col. 892-893).

⁶² *Periphyseon*, 5. 24, ed. CCCM 165, p. 436 (PL 122, col. 911).

⁶³ *Periphyseon*, 4. 5, ed. CCCM 164, p. 248 (PL 122, col. 760).

⁶⁴ *Periphyseon*, 5. 38, ed. CCCM 165, p. 806 (PL 122, col. 1007).

without touching the person wearing it. In writing about ordinary human beings, Eriugena had discounted physical existence, saying that, while the body grew and diminished as it aged, changing like a garment, the form (the soul) remained unchanged in the midst of costume shifts. Similarly, he argued that the Word of God remained undefiled in the garment of the defiled humanity he wore.⁶⁵

Negating corporeality, time, and space, Eriugena's interpretation of Christ in particular and of Scripture in general radically discounts physical, which is also to say the historical and the moral, and the pictorial. Whatever the biblical passage, Eriugena quickly brushed aside the literal meaning of the text and appropriated the words of Scripture as symbols with which to unlock sacred mysteries.⁶⁶ Thus, for Eriugena, Jesus's personality and his historical life and works – including the Passion – were peripheral to the fact that Jesus was the Word of God, in whom the world was made and through whom it was returning to God, its source. So powerful was Eriugena's rejection of the personal and the physical that he dismissed as untenable the doctrines that Jesus's corpse had risen from the tomb, and that, in his physical body, Jesus was enthroned with God until the Second Coming.⁶⁷

Working with the metaphysical hierarchy of cause and effect, Eriugena explained why the Word – in, through, and for which all things were made according to his divinity – “descended” from causes to effects according to his humanity. The reciprocal order (*ratio*) linking cause and effects demanded that they arise and die together, or simultaneously and always remain. If the Wisdom of God had not descended save the effects of the causes that lived eternally in him the *ratio* of the causes would have perished with their effects, and neither cause nor effect would have remained. In this way, human nature, containing the whole world, was restored in a special way in the Word of God,

⁶⁵ *Periphyseon*, 4. 1, ed. CCCM 164, pp. 176-179 (*PL* 122, col. 743); 4. 3, ed. CCCM 164, pp. 186-189 (*PL* 122, cols. 745-746), quoting Epiphanius's sermon *On the Faith*; 4. 9, ed. CCCM 164, pp. 176-179 (*PL* 122, col. 777); 5. 8-13, ed. CCCM 165, pp. 196-205 (*PL* 122, col. 876-878). On physical changes in the normal human life cycle, see *Periphyseon*, 5. 6, ed. CCCM 165, p. 282 (*PL* 122, col. 872). On Eriugena's doctrines about the Crucifixion, see the illuminating analysis by C. CHAZELLE in *The Crucified God in the Carolingian Era: Theology and Art of Christ's Passion* (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 201-204.

⁶⁶ D. CARABINE, *John Scottus Eriugena* (Oxford and New York, 2000), p. 80. D.F. DUCLOW, “Denial or promise of the Tree of Life?” in: *Iohannes Scottus Eriugena*, pp. 230-231. C. STEEL, “The tree of the knowledge of Good and Evil”, *ibid.*, pp. 240-241. MCGINN, “The originality of Eriugena's spiritual exegesis”, *ibid.*, pp. 61-72.

⁶⁷ *Periphyseon*, 5. 37, ed. CCCM 165, pp. 740-748 (*PL* 122, col. 990-992).

and, at the end of the world, it would be restored generally and universally in him.⁶⁸

Christ was the paradise promised to the saints, into whom they had already entered in part (namely, in the soul), and outside whom they still remain in part (namely, in the body).⁶⁹ Until the final return, no longer remote and secret as the Word, Christ proceeds as theophany into the knowledge of angels and men, uniting the sensory and intelligible world in himself by an incomprehensible harmony, and making the inaccessible light accessible to all intellectual and rational orders of creation.⁷⁰

At the end of the cycle of redemption, humanity would be completely transformed into its causes, and nature would be changed into God, as air is transfigured into light.⁷¹ Yet, even there, the return would be, as it always had been, a polyrhythmic composition. Transfigured souls would carry vestiges of their former animality with them. By natural appetite and the Creator's grace, all – good and evil alike – would be raised from the dead and live eternally, but the good alone would live blessedly (*beate*).⁷² In the incarnate Word all humanity would return to its pristine state. But Eriugena adverted to Jesus's statement, "In my Father's house are many mansions" (Io 13, 2), to support his conception of a graded return.⁷³

All that God had not created would be destroyed. As we saw, Eriugena denied that there would be any physical existence after the resurrection, no bodies and no places (such as heaven and hell) for them to inhabit. Evil, sin, death, diabolic wickedness, universal impiety – would be abolished. The nature of demons, fallen angels as they were, had been created good and would survive; but their malice and evil would perish.⁷⁴ The Hell Eriugena envisioned was that the reprobate would be confined forever to the fantasies and phantasms of their own minds.⁷⁵ The material world will have passed away, but false images of it will remain vivid in their minds. Chained to these illusions, they will lust insatiably for material gratifications that no longer exist, pursuing their fantasies of evil and punished, not by God, but by their own consciences, as, in this world, Judas was tortured by his conscience for betraying Christ. They will

⁶⁸ *Periphyseon*, 5. 25, ed. CCCM 165, pp. 440-442 (PL 122, col. 912).

⁶⁹ *Periphyseon*, 5. 20, ed. CCCM 165, p. 374 (PL 122, col. 895).

⁷⁰ *Periphyseon*, 5. 24, ed. CCCM 165, pp. 442-444 (PL 122, cols. 912-913).

⁷¹ *Periphyseon*, 5. 8, ed. CCCM 165, p. 296 (PL 122, col. 876).

⁷² *Periphyseon*, 5. 3, ed. CCCM 165, p. 264 (PL 122, col. 868).

⁷³ *Periphyseon*, 5. 36, ed. CCCM 165, pp. 692-694, 710-716 (PL 122, cols. 978, 982-984).

OTTEN, *The Anthropology of Johannes Scottus Eriugena*, pp. 216-217.

⁷⁴ *Periphyseon*, 5. 28, ed. CCCM 165, p. 524 (PL 122, cols. 934-935).

⁷⁵ *Periphyseon*, 5. 30, ed. CCCM 165, pp. 562-564 (PL 122, cols. 944-945).

be sealed up forever in the “empty dreams” of their own minds, sin without the possibility of sinning, malice without wrongdoing, impiety without the worship of idols. Their vain thoughts would not be changed into glory, but would remain forever. Repentance would come too late for things that they illicitly and beyond measure lusted for in this life, roasting them as though with a flame that will not go out. They will be like an asbestos stone, Eriugena wrote, that remains forever undiminished and forever burns.⁷⁶

The evil would always keep their ardour and appetite for acting perversely, but the flame of malevolent desire would burn nowhere but in itself. What remained of the evil in eternal life was stinking cadavers, stripped of every vital function.⁷⁷

By contrast, through the overflow of Divine Goodness, apart from any natural resources, the purest intellects ascended through countless levels of divine contemplation into God himself, by deification. Jesus promised many chambers in the Father’s house. There would be as many rooms as there were elect. We shall all be raised, Eriugena wrote, but only the elect will be changed into the glory of deification, which surpasses all nature and paradise.⁷⁸ Grace assigned to each according to his own measure the degree of contemplation possible to him. In this proportional hierarchy of lower and higher orders, there is a height to which only Christ can ascend.⁷⁹ Only the humanity of the Word can ascend beyond all mediating theophanies into what, attempting to express the inexpressible, Eriugena called a “theophany of theophanies”. Angels and men who rose above all others could rise with Christ into this divine manifestation, like the Apostle Paul, seized up in the clouds to be with Christ and always to be there with him.⁸⁰

Christ was the “Father’s house”, in which there were many mansions, the paradise in which each human being would have a place proportionate to his own dealings in this life. Judas Iscariot and Simon Peter were in the same room, supping with Christ. The one, who put his hand into the dish, was the traitor of Christ’s humanity. The other, who is not read to have put his hand into the dish with Christ, contemplated the divinity of Christ. Both were of the same nature which was redeemed in Christ. In the Father’s house, those are happy, Eriugena

⁷⁶ *Periphyseon*, 5. 29, 31, 36, 37, ed. CCCM 165, pp. 528-535, 562-566, 576-578, 628-630 (PL 122, cols. 936-937, 944-945, 948-949, 961).

⁷⁷ *Periphyseon*, 5. 29, ed. CCCM 165, pp. 528-530 (PL 122, col. 936).

⁷⁸ *Periphyseon*, 1. 8, ed. CCCM 161, p. 12 (PL 122, col. 448); 5. 23, 31, 36, ed. CCCM 165, pp. 406-408, 416-422, 564-566, 692-696 (PL 122, cols. 903, 906-907, 945, 978).

⁷⁹ *Periphyseon*, 5. 24, ed. CCCM 165, pp. 436-438 (PL 122, col. 911).

⁸⁰ *Periphyseon*, 5. 23, ed. CCCM 165, pp. 414-416 (PL 122, col. 905).

added, who in that house enter the shrine of Wisdom which is Christ, and who ascend into the pitch darkness of the most sublime light.⁸¹

The mutation of human nature into God was, not a destructive, but a wonderful and inexpressible return to its pristine state. It occurred, as did all knowledge, when what was known became one with the knower. What wonder, Eriugena asked, if, when our nature is to contemplate God face to face, it could be one with him and in him, in those who are worthy, according to the measure given to each to contemplate him?⁸²

In humanity's pristine condition, as a notion eternally made in the mind of God, there could be no self-knowing. Did its restoration to that condition entail an oblivion of self-knowing, a self-forgetting?

3. *The Paradox Of Return: God, The Multiplex Monad*

The final point of attack was the power of sensual beauty to carry the soul by analogies to higher and higher orders of immaterial truth. For Theodore the Studite, in the thick of the Byzantine iconoclast dispute, this elevation occurred because the prototype (or subject) and the image were reciprocally in one another, and the mind passed from the representation to the original.⁸³ Yet, art concealed itself working on the senses in hidden ways, stirring mind and heart invisibly by the visible means of design, colour, and physical ingredients, all elements of signification. Eriugena escaped this proposition by abandoning signs for ciphers.

Eriugena found numerical progression from one to infinity an exact parallel to the polyrhythmic universal return. Numbers, he observed, proceed from the monad into infinity, which is also their end; for the monad and infinity are alike the unity of all numbers. In that unity, Eriugena wrote, all were simple by nature and manifold according to the *rationes* according to which they were multiplied. For, he went on, all numbers subsist eternally and incommunicably in the monad, and, even as they derive from it, they are not absent in it, since they can not abandon their natural condition. Whether they are multiplied or resolved, they come from it, and return into it, according to the rules of the discipline that considers their principles (*rationes*). Thus, it was possible to

⁸¹ *Periphyseon*, 5. 36, ed. CCCM 165, pp. 712-718 (PL 122, cols. 983-984).

⁸² *Periphyseon*, 5. 8, ed. CCCM 165, p. 298 (PL 122, col. 876).

⁸³ Theodore the Studite, *On the Holy Icons*, First Refutation, c. 13; Second Refutation, cc. 11, 17; Third Refutation, A: c. 1; B: c. 10; D: c. 10 (tr. ROSS, pp. 34, 48, 52, 99-100, 106, 112).

speak of an ineffable multiplicity of divine unity, and to say that God was one thing, multiplex in itself.⁸⁴

Eriugena knew what he was doing when he described the fourth character in his story, God as destination ("*natura increata et increans*"), as a category of impossibilities, including the non-being of God, God as "nothing".

In the same way, human nature was simple and multiplex. As we have seen, in the Word, humanity retained its original simplicity and purity, while, in the universal return, all the levels of its articulation into time were gathered up into God, from demons and the stinking corpses of the wicked to those who were seized up to be with Christ in the theophany of theophanies. This parallel elucidates how what we call anthropology was swallowed up in theology. What we call Eriugena's anthropology was actually a branch of what he called theology – the wisdom by which the contemplative mind, whether human or angelic – considers the eternal and changeless things of God, either the First Cause of all or the primordial causes of things which the Father once and for all put in his Word. The nature of things, in their categories, properties, and distinctions, joined to bodies or not, Eriugena assigned, not to wisdom, but to a branch of rational knowledge he called physics.⁸⁵ I shall now indicate how Eriugena's language of love and beauty converged with the impersonality of number, and what residual doubts Eriugena acknowledged about his own system of thought.

It was inevitable that anthropology should be swallowed up in theology when God was all in all, and man was defined as "a certain intellectual notion eternally made in the Divine Mind", when "we are nothing other – in so far as we are – than the *rationes* of us eternally situated in God".⁸⁶ Eriugena excluded nothing when he wrote that God, who alone truly is, is the Being of all, and, whole he is complete in all, he is complete outside of all, complete around the world, complete in creation accessible to the senses, complete in creation accessible to the intellect, complete in everything". Humanity followed as God's image, whole in its universe. Cleaving to Christ, the Word, humanity was above all things, above himself insofar as, with Christ, he is above and in all things.⁸⁷ Yet, Eriugena's template of mathematical progression depersonalized this movement.

⁸⁴ *Periphyseon*, 3. 11, 17, ed. CCCM 163, pp. 324-326, 416 (*PL* 122, cols. 653-654, 674): "*Deus est enim unum multiplex in seipso*".

⁸⁵ *Periphyseon*, 3. 3, ed. CCCM 163, pp. 222-225 (*PL* 122, cols. 628-629).

⁸⁶ *Periphyseon*, 3. 8, ed. CCCM 163, p. 270 (*PL* 122, col. 640); 4. 7, CCCM 164, pp. 282-285 (*PL* 122, col. 768).

⁸⁷ *Periphyseon*, 4. 5, ed. CCCM 164, pp. 244, 246-248 (*PL* 122, col. 759).

Eriugena could not take over the Neoplatonic paradigm of egress and return, and – even in their de-visualized forms – the metaphors of archetype and image, macrocosm and microcosm, without also appropriating the language of love and beauty. True to his Platonic legacy, even Eriugena's love remains a version of Plato's inherent, impersonal attraction of like to like, rather than an emotion, a passion.

Eriugena recognized "Love" as a name of God, using the word *amor*, with its ardent, erotic connotations. But this name, he wrote, was a metaphor for God, as were "Mind" (*animus*) and "Intellect" (*intellectus*). Rhetoric applied to the Creator qualities proper to creatures; to be sure, God was the source of those properties – love, mind, intellect, and all the others.⁸⁸ However, God had no emotions. God alone was impassible, undesiring and therefore unloving. He sought nothing other than Himself, since He alone was all in all.⁸⁹ To be sure, in one passage, Eriugena roused himself to incendiary language in portraying God as a love (*charitas*, chaste spiritual love) that blazed forth hot, consuming the offerings of the faithful as in a holocaust. In this way, he wrote, God would foster and nurture the faithful and reform them from their formless imperfection into the perfect man, Christ in full maturity.⁹⁰

Would it not be possible to say that God loves in view of the fact that, even though he excels every movement of love, he seeks nothing besides himself, and since he alone is all in all? Certainly, logic could be bent to justify the metaphor. For God is rightly called love because he is the cause of every love, and is diffused through all things, and collects all things into one, returns to himself by an ineffable reversion, and, finally, ends the amatory movements of all creation in himself. Moreover, he alone can be called truly "lovable", because he alone is supreme goodness and beauty.⁹¹

Still, Eriugena consistently held that love passed up the ladder of being from creatures to Creator, rather than from the top down. All things were united by this impersonal, innate attraction, looking to their common source and the goal in which their movement was accomplished: the only supreme and true goodness and beauty. Love, passing from creatures to Creator, was the impersonal force that drew everything together in an inseparable unity.⁹² God was

⁸⁸ *Periphyseon*, 1. 68, ed. CCCM 161 (PL 122, col. 512-513); 3. 7, ed. CCCM 163, pp. 418-420 (PL 122, col. 675).

⁸⁹ *Periphyseon*, 1. 68, ed. CCCM 161, p. 414 (PL 122, cols. 512-513).

⁹⁰ *Periphyseon*, 4. 1, ed. CCCM 164, p. 176 (PL 122, col. 743).

⁹¹ *Periphyseon*, 1. 63, 68, 74, ed. CCCM 161, pp. 398, 438-446 (PL 122, col. 508, 512, 519-520).

⁹² *Periphyseon*, 1. 74, ed. CCCM 161, pp. 442-444 (PL 122, col. 520).

called “love” (*amor*) because He caused *amor* in His creatures, not because He, the Impassible, loved.

The student in Eriugena’s dialogue pauses at one stage. He shrinks from saying that God does not love and is not love, and that he neither moves nor is moved. Surely, he says, he will impale himself on a thicket of spears from Scripture, if he teaches such things openly. It would be hard to persuade simple minds of these assertions, and those who pass as wise (*sapientes*) would cover their ears with horror when they heard them.⁹³ But he and the Master continue inexorably on their way.

At the heart of love was beauty, above all, God, ineffable Beauty itself. A divine force, love of beauty, impelled the stable mobility of universal return. Just as a magnet attracts iron by its natural power without moving or feeling anything from the iron, so God draws everything that is from him back to him – whether or not they know what they love – without any movement of his own, but only by the power of his beauty. Love of his beauty moves them.⁹⁴ The entire cycle of movement, articulations away from God and re-integrations into God, restored the beauty of nature, destroyed in the first man, and the first articulation, that into male and female. By its Incarnation in Jesus, the divine Word, recapitulated this going forth and returning in order to recover the pristine beauty of universal nature.⁹⁵ However, in the egress from God, the primal beauty was articulated, not lost. God’s ineffable beauty subsisted in itself. What empty reasonings called evil, ugliness, and injustice did not exist. The apparent separation of the human image from the divine archetype, might have deformed the perfect simplicity in which divine wholeness subsisted. Even that separation occurred in a process by which archetype and image were made in one another, returning to the primal simplicity. Thus, what appeared ugly – such as evil and misery – were actually notes and causes of beauty within the whole, and this was true even of the suffering endured by wrongdoers after death.⁹⁶ They are included in Eriugena’s statement that, at the final return of all things to God, the harmony of Creation would be so arranged that there would remain no malice or evil opposing good, no ugliness or deformity opposing beauty.⁹⁷

⁹³ *Periphyseon*, 1. 63, ed. CCCM 161, p. 398 (PL 122, col. 508).

⁹⁴ *Periphyseon*, 1. 62, 75, ed. CCCM 161, pp. 380-384, 444-446 (PL 122, cols. 505, 520).

⁹⁵ *Periphyseon*, 4. 4, ed. CCCM 164, p. 198 (PL 122, col. 748): “*in pristinum decorem restituitur*”.

⁹⁶ *Periphyseon*, 5. 34, 35, 36, ed. CCCM. 165, pp. 592-596, 656-670 (PL 122, cols. 952-953, 968-972).

⁹⁷ *Periphyseon*, 5. 36, ed. CCCM 165, p. 656 (PL 122, col. 966).

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Abstraction negates compassion. I have the sense that compassion is what made the devotional use of religious art a means of self-knowing. The rationale is simple. You see a picture, and your heart reaches out to the subject. You want to be like the subject, or, in some way, to be at one with it. In this way, you discover something about yourself, your needs and fears, perhaps, and aspirations. Compassion makes possible an affective bonding by you, the viewer, to the subject in the picture.

It follows that ways of thinking that impair or forbid compassion militate against the use of religious art in this way, even though, unlike iconoclasm, they may happily allow religious art for other cult uses, such as illustration or ornament.

Given the conception of love in Eriugena's vocabulary, it was quite natural that Eriugena's theology militated against the contemplative use of religious art; its abstract impersonality negated compassion. Despite his extensive knowledge of medicine, and his elaborate analyses of pain eternally suffered by the evil, Eriugena betrays no sympathy or fellow-feeling of any kind for sufferers in this world or the next. He seems as pitiless as iron.

The key word defining beauty was order. Eriugena wrote that the ordered beauty of the whole was like a great household, or a royal court. Inhabitants of such an establishment, he wrote, fell into many categories, with each category assigned to appropriate quarters, from the Master's sumptuous apartments down to the squalor of his most verminous servants. All these appointments, by their very completeness, were made "for the grace of [the household's] beauty".⁹⁸ In heaven, God ordered within himself, as though in some household, all whom he chose to be made conformable with himself.⁹⁹

The beauty of the universe was like the Father's house with many mansions spoken of by Jesus. It included unclean spirits, which divine Providence used, as well as clean spirits, to order the universe.¹⁰⁰ It included Satan. When Christ came from heaven to put on the earthly robe of flesh and, dying, rose changing into God the robe he had taken from the Virgin, Satan could find no death-hole in which to hide except the hearts of Jews, stinking with corruption, carnal, ignorant of truth, greedy and hateful to Christ. Jews too had their place in the

⁹⁸ *De divina praedestinatione*, 17. 5, ed. G. MADEC (Turnhout, 1978: CCCM 50), p. 107. *Periphyseon*, 5. 36, ed. CCCM 165, pp. 672-674 (PL 122, cols. 972-973).

⁹⁹ *Periphyseon*, 5. 25, ed. CCCM 165, p. 438 (PL 122, col. 911).

¹⁰⁰ *Periphyseon*, 3. 13, ed. CCCM 163, p. 366 (PL 122, col. 662); 5. 36, ed. CCCM 165, pp. 710-712 (PL 122, cols. 982-983).

beauty of cosmic order.¹⁰¹ There was no beauty, Eriugena wrote, without contrasts and oppositions, without linked similar and dissimilar things, all alike made by God, since nothing was outside God. Good would be less laudable without comparison with evil; and, since evil contributed to esteem for the good, it could not be without esteem itself.¹⁰²

Evidently, Eriugena's aesthetics did not require compassion. It was intellectual, or functional, rather than affective or sensual. Its triumph of function over feeling is apparent in Eriugena's description of an iron stylus as a work of beauty, with the one end sharp for writing and the other blunt for deleting, suited to the needs of writers. His aesthetics is cold and smooth as iron.¹⁰³

At royal courts and magnificent churches and monasteries, Eriugena's environment was saturated with objects of magnificence unimaginable for us. He evokes some of that breathtaking splendour when he sweeps across the grandeur of a great household with its buildings of vast dimensions and architectural ornaments, enormously varied pictures outside and inside with their colours and figures beyond number, expert embellishment with an array of stones and the most precious metals, every kind of window flooding the chambers with light – each and every part contributing to “the most perfect glory of beauty”.¹⁰⁴ Eriugena hints at the dazzling magnificence of great Carolingian churches when he speaks of the ingenuity and opulence of their architecture, their glass windows and pictures, golden vessels and ornaments aflame with jewels and gold, vestments in costly purple, altars fragrant with incense.¹⁰⁵ With difficulty, scholars have resisted the conclusion that Eriugena had a hand in writing captions for illuminations in one magnificent book, luxurious enough to be called a *Codex Aureus*, used in such churches.¹⁰⁶ Here and there, Eriugena refers to other incidental marvels: for example, a golden globe atop a tower, and a heavily jewelled gold vase.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰¹ *Iohannis Scotti Erivgenae Carmina*, No. 9, ed. HERREN, p. 92: “*Postquam nostra salus*”. *Periphyseon* 5. 36, ed. CCCM 165, pp. 682-684 (PL 122, col. 975).

¹⁰² *Periphyseon*, 5. 36, ed. CCCM 165, pp. 710-712 (PL 122, cols. 982-983).

¹⁰³ *De divina praedestinatione*, 16. 5, ed. MADEC, p. 99.

¹⁰⁴ *De divina praedestinatione*, 17. 5, ed. MADEC, p. 106.

¹⁰⁵ *Iohannis Scotti Erivgenae Carmina*, No. 3, ed. HERREN, p. 70: “*Auribus Aebracis notum*”; No. 4, ed. HERREN, p. 72: “*Haec nostram dominam*”; No. 10, ed. HERREN, p. 96: “*Graculus Iudaeus*”; No. 25, ed. HERREN, p. 120: “*Aulae sidereae*”. On “*Aulae sidereae*” (No. 25), see M. HERREN, “Eriugena's *Aulae Sidereae*, the ‘Codex Aureus’, and the Palatine Church of St. Mary at Compiègne”, *Studi Medievali*, 3rd ser., 28 (1987), esp. pp. 594-595, 606-608.

¹⁰⁶ *Iohannis Scotti Erivgenae Carmina*, ed. HERREN, pp. 40-41 (the *Codex Aureus* of Regensburg). See also the article by Herren cited in the previous note.

¹⁰⁷ *Periphyseon* 4. 16, ed. CCCM 164, pp. 534-539 (PL 122, cols. 828-829); 5. 12, ed. CCCM

Eriugena's doctrines about the mind never approached a complete psychology; they omitted too much. As we saw, he regarded the body and the physical senses, including vision, as burdens on the soul; and he also was ambivalent toward intellectual images formed from sensory data. Their value, like that of the iron stylus, depended on their use. Dialectic, he wrote from experience, was God's own gift for discerning truth from falsehood and teaching the ignorant. And yet, even dialectic could be used perniciously making what was false look true, confusing the senses of simple folk in order to keep the inner eye of their mind from coming to know the pure truth. This rule of thumb applied to any good thing given by God. For the majority of human beings used the beauties of sensory things lethally to gratify their appetites and passions.¹⁰⁸

Abstraction and denial of emotions, like compassion, aroused by the senses led Eriugena to the aesthetic of number. God's artistry lay, not in physical beauties, but in the numerical proportions according to which everything was made, by measure, number, and order.¹⁰⁹ The harmony of the cosmos consisted in the same fixed numerical ratios as those of the musical scale, a paradigm of Eriugena's paradoxical "stable mobility", since music and the heavens require motion.¹¹⁰ Eriugena adapted the axiomatic premise of Christian theology – that God created all things by number, weight, and measure – omitting weight, with its implications of physical mass, and substituting order. He followed his version, all intellect and no body, to its literal conclusion. The beauty in which he found God's handiwork most authentically was, not visual, but intellectual, beyond the senses in the abstract proportions called "harmony". His analogy between the order of a household, or court, and that of the universe depended on his perception that all their parts were held together by a "single harmony". In each case, the ensemble manifested a harmony like that one hears when listening to a chorus, without being able to distinguish the sound of any particular voice or instrument, though each one does retain its own tone.¹¹¹

As Stephen Gersch has cogently observed: "Eriugena clearly conceives the ultimate mystery of creation more readily in harmonic than in any other terms".¹¹² As Gersch also observed, Eriugena readily applied metaphors and

165, pp. 324-326 (PL 122, col. 883).

¹⁰⁸ *De divina praedestinatione* 7. 1, ed. MADEC, p. 45.

¹⁰⁹ *De divina praedestinatione*, 7. 5, ed. MADEC, p. 47.

¹¹⁰ *Periphyseon*, 3. 9, 34-35, ed. CCCM 163, pp. 304-306, 610-622 (PL 122, cols. 648, 722-724).

¹¹¹ *Periphyseon*, 5. 13, 36, ed. CCCM 165, pp. 326-328, 672-676 (PL 122, cols. 883-884, 972-973).

¹¹² S. GERSCH, *Concord in Discourse: Harmonies and Semiotics in Late Classical and Early Medieval Platonism* (New York, 1996), p. 163.

analogues of harmony to his cognitive and semiotic explications.¹¹³ Among the luxurious arts with which Charles the Bald honoured Dionysius the Areopagite at the monastery of St. Denis, Eriugena carefully registered the “harmonious chants of celebrants which strike the stars”.¹¹⁴ The language of a harmony achieved in octaves runs throughout Eriugena’s conception of nature as an ordered whole; and yet, it is a harmony immune to feeling aroused by the senses and far indeed from what he mistrusted as the human liability to irrationality, to passion.¹¹⁵ His great exemplar, Dionysius the Areopagite urged his disciple, Timothy, to abandon the senses and intellectual ideas as well, and unknowing to enter into unity with Him who was above all Being.¹¹⁶

“Nothing”, Eriugena wrote, “is more pleasing to the soul than the blending of different voices [so ordered in their mutual relations as] to produce sweet music”. Here, too, Eriugena’s intellectualized harmony included evil. The punishment of the evil was that they remained evil. After the final consummation of the cosmic return to God, the most beautiful harmony would come from the punishment of the evil and the delights of the good.¹¹⁷

Eriugena’s doctrine left no place for art as a stimulus of emotions. Earthly passions and carnal desires belonged to beasts. They followed from sin and inhered in the most debased, irrational stage of fallen humanity. They led to physical death and decay. In the spiritually perfect, passions conducive to vice could be transmuted into virtues.¹¹⁸ But this entailed an escape from passion into an impersonal, transcending and timeless love. True to his Neoplatonic forerunners, Eriugena used the language of love aroused by beauty to describe the power drawing all things back to God, their origin and goal. But there is no more passion in that language than there is in Eriugena’s parallel metaphor of a magnet attracting iron “only by the power of its beauty”, without moving itself or being affected by the iron.¹¹⁹ Verbs of longing and being longed for, desiring and being desired, Eriugena observed, are all the same in meaning with verbs of motion. Love was God, the power binding up the whole cosmos, moving in a circular motion from itself, through itself and toward itself. The

¹¹³ GERSCH, *Concord in Discourse*, p. 199.

¹¹⁴ *Iohannis Scotti Erivgenae Carmina*, No. 10, ed. HERREN, p. 96: “*Graculus Iudaeus*”.

¹¹⁵ *Iohannis Scotti Erivgenae Carmina*, No. 25, p. 116: “*Aulae sidereae*” (octaves, applied to the Incarnation). *Periphyseon*, 5. 7, ed. CCCM 165, pp. 228-296 (PL 122, cols. 874-876).

¹¹⁶ *Periphyseon*, 4. 5, ed. CCCM 164, p. 246 (PL 122, col. 759).

¹¹⁷ *Periphyseon*, 5. 36, ed. CCCM 165, pp. 644-648 (PL 122, cols. 965-966).

¹¹⁸ *Periphyseon*, 5. 7, 25, ed. CCCM 165, pp. 288-296, 454-458 (PL 122, cols. 874-876, 915-916).

¹¹⁹ *Periphyseon*, 1. 75, ed. CCCM 161, pp. 438-444 (PL 122, cols. 519-520): “*sola suae pulchritudinis virtute*”.

distribution of itself by proportion through the various orders of nature was the same means by which God attracted them to itself by its goodness and beauty.¹²⁰

Eriugena's doctrine of a polyrhythmic return to God made physical death a way-station on the path to transmutation of all into God. The end of this present life, he wrote, is the beginning of the one to come. The death of the flesh is a sign of the restoration of nature and an anticipation of the return to ancient wholeness. The tradition of theologians, he wrote, universally agreed.¹²¹ But what if it were all an error? What if the definition of a man as an animal, rational, mortal, and capable of laughter were entirely sufficient?¹²² Then, he recognized, his reasoning would entirely fall apart. He would have laboured in vain, and all the statements by the Fathers, which he had quoted, would be ludicrous, the stuff of laughter.¹²³

Scripture was the key by which Eriugena hoped to enter into the secret places of Truth. Who could dare say anything about the hidden Deity other than what was said in Scripture? How was it to be read with our rude and childlike minds? Understanding of divine words was manifold and infinite. Texts of Scripture, like the parables of Jesus, were full of twists and turns and inconsistencies. Eriugena himself had changed his mind on at least one major doctrine, and realized that the simple would be difficult to win over to his teaching that God neither loved nor was loved, neither was nor subsisted, and that the wise would stop their ears in horror against his teachings. After all, those doctrines, he realized, ran counter to many passages in Scripture. His

¹²⁰ *Periphyseon*, 1. 74; 3. 3, ed. CCCM 161, pp. 438-444 (PL 122, cols. 520, 629-630).

¹²¹ *Periphyseon*, 5. 7, ed. CCCM 165, p. 298 (PL 122, col. 876).

¹²² *Periphyseon*, 1. 4, ed. CCCM 161, p. 125 (PL 122, col. 444). See also *Periphyseon*, 2. 23, ed. CCCM 162, p. 314 (PL 122, col. 571): human nature consists of a trinity of vital motion (nutritive faculties), sense, and reason. The definition of man as mortal, animal, rational, and capable of laughter occurs in a gloss which probably originated with Eriugena. Manuscripts vary on the unexpected word *risibile*, rendered *visibile* in the Migne edition, with *risibile* relegated to the *apparatus criticus*. I.P. Sheldon-Williams preferred *risibile* (*Iohannis Scotti Erigenae Periphyseon (De Divisione Naturae)*, ed. I.P. SHELDON-WILLIAMS (Dublin, 1981), p. 40). Edouard Jauneau accepts *risibile* (CCCM 162, *loc. cit.* and p. 6). The probability that Eriugena meant and wrote *risibile* is indicated by the fact that his list of characteristics, including *risibile* duplicates a list given by Isidore of Seville (*Etymologiae* 25. 8), and quoted by Theodulf of Orléans in the *Libri Carolini* (Theodulf of Orléans, *Opus Caroli Regis contra Synodum (Libri Carolini)*, I, 2, ed. A. FREEMAN (Hannover, 1998: MGH CONC 2, Supplementum 1), p. 117: "*qui hac definitione definiri potest, ut dicatur animalis, rationalis, mortalis, risus sensusque capax*"; IV. 21 (p. 541): "*Homo est animal rationale mortale risibile et cetera huiuscemodi*". Cf. Eriugena's unproblematic definition: "*homo est animal rationale, mortale, sensus et disciplinae capax*" (*Periphyseon*, 4. 7, ed. CCCM 164, pp. 284-285 (PL 122, col. 768)).

¹²³ *Periphyseon*, 5. 28, ed. CCCM 165, p. 528 (PL 122, col. 935).

doctrines excluding the resurrection of the flesh also ran counter to Scripture, and he was dumbstruck find that some of the Fathers taught that physical bodies would be raised from the dead.¹²⁴ What the unwise (*insipientes*) derived from Holy Writ was always open to question.¹²⁵ Reading Scripture was rather like looking at a peacock's feather, even at one small point, and seeing an amazing and beautiful variety of colours, more than could be numbered.¹²⁶

Eriugena scorned those who perversely interpreted Scripture, reading it literally, corrupting it with human or diabolical superstitions, and rendering it amendable to carnal lusts. Such, he said, was empty and useless wisdom, the plaything of *phantasiae*, like that of the perfidious Jews and the venomous heretics, who followed on the letter of Sacred History and hated its mystical understanding.¹²⁷ Yet, such interpretations retained the vivid, sensory imagery in Biblical texts, as Eriugena's own method, abstract and hostile to sensory associations, did not, while, he said, it rendered spiritual interpretation, purged of every carnal sense and superstition.¹²⁸ He set forth a charismatic doctrine of authentic interpretation. Those who crossed over into God and apprehended the divine mysteries, even in this life, ceased all intellectual activity in a kind of death. Grace raised them above themselves. Theologians, Eriugena wrote, were like musical instruments that the ineffable, divine nature used to play about itself. They became one with God by the power of contemplation; they became God by grace.¹²⁹ What, he asked, was he to do, so far behind them in grace and enlightenment? To be silent would be to follow the example of the fruitless servant, who kept safe the talent his Lord gave him by burying it in the earth. He pressed ahead, remembering the admonition not to wish to know high things, but to fear knowing them.¹³⁰

Aware of all words – his own and those by which Satan tempted Adam and Eve – as works of the flesh, Eriugena insisted that, in contemplating God, ignorance was true wisdom. Was one fruit of self-knowing a sense of one's own

¹²⁴ *Periphyseon*, 1. 63, ed. CCCM 161, p. 398 (PL 122, col. 508); 5. 23, 36, ed. CCCM 165, pp. 388-390, 724-726 (PL 122, cols. 898-899, 986). On the resurrection of the flesh, see above, pp. 59-60.

¹²⁵ See Eriugena's scorn for the way the simple interpreted Scriptural passages on the dissolution of the body. *Periphyseon*, 4. 26, ed. CCCM 164, pp. 660-662 (PL 122, col. 859).

¹²⁶ *Periphyseon*, 1. 65, ed. CCCM 161, pp. 400-402 (PL 122, col. 509); 4. 5, ed. CCCM 164, p. 202 (PL 122, col. 749). On Eriugena's conception of multiple interpretations of Scripture, see OTTEN, *The Anthropology of Johannes Scottus Eriugena*, pp. 104-105.

¹²⁷ *Periphyseon*, 4. 24, ed. CCCM 164, p. 622 (PL 122, col. 850).

¹²⁸ *Periphyseon*, 4. 21, ed. CCCM 164, p. 578 (PL 122, col. 839).

¹²⁹ *Periphyseon*, 1. 64, ed. CCCM 161, p. 400 (PL 122, col. 509); 5. 21, ed. CCCM 165, p. 384 (PL 122, cols. 897-898).

¹³⁰ *Periphyseon*, 3. 1, ed. CCCM 163, p. 216 (PL 122, col. 627).

limits in matters of theology, and a fear of transgressing them?¹³¹ Surpassing every intellect, God was more truly and faithfully denied, than affirmed, in every proposition. Among all things that can be said or understood, God counted as “nothing (*nihil*)”. No one, Eriugena wrote, could approach him without first abandoning all the bodily senses and intellectual activities, casting aside all things that are and are not, and returning in a state of unawareness (*inscius*) to unity with him who is above all being and understanding.¹³²

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Traces of this abandonment appear in the prayer that I mentioned at the outset, and to which I now turn by way of recapitulation.¹³³ It comes toward the end of the *Periphyseon*. Though the treatise is, in fact, an extended commentary on the stories of Creation in Genesis, Eriugena cast it as a dialectical exercise, a question-and-answer dialogue between characters named “*Nutritor*” (“Nourisher”, or Teacher) and “*Alumnus*” (“the One Nourished”, or Student). The prayer comes as a parenthesis in the dialectical movement. Nutritor brackets it at the beginning by interpreting Jesus’s parables of the Prodigal Son and of the Lost Drachma and Lost Sheep in such a way as to provoke serious questions of consistency from Alumnus. Nutritor’s answer leads Alumnus to comment that the Holy Spirit, the true author of Scripture, deliberately intruded obscurity into the text, with complex twists and turns, not so much to conceal authentic meaning as to make pure understanding a reward to be won (and cherished) as the result of intense, devout labour. He continues offering the prayer I mentioned. Eriugena plainly knew the vagrant, expansive tendencies of spontaneous prayer; for Alumnus abruptly closes the parenthesis of prayer. He and Nutritor must get back to the matter at hand, he says, without dallying too much. Otherwise, they will seem more preoccupied with words, verbiage, than with understanding. Nutritor then brackets the prayer at the end with an interpretation of another parable of Jesus, that of the Wise and Foolish Virgins.¹³⁴

Alumnus prays that Jesus will allow him to find Jesus in the words of Scripture, his words, for that is where he dwells, where he leads his chosen

¹³¹ *Periphyseon*, 3. 17, ed. CCCM 163, p. 414 (PL 122, col. 674).

¹³² *Periphyseon*, 1. 66, ed. CCCM 161, p. 406 (PL 122, col. 510).

¹³³ A translation of this prayer is at the end of this essay, Appendix A, p. 519.

¹³⁴ *Periphyseon* 5. 38, ed. CCCM 165, p. 820 (PL 122, col. 1011): “*ne forte plus in verbis quam in intellectibus nostram disputationem implesse videamur*”.

ones, where he ministers to them the feast that it is to know truly. Anything intervening between knower and known will deceive. Alumnus prays to know the spirit-given meaning in the words directly, rather than through human reflections on the words, including reflections of his own mind.

Alumnus's great wish is that his understanding may penetrate the words of Scripture to the place where Jesus dwells, prepares a feast for his elect, and ministers his presence to them. I shall focus on the three great paradoxes Eriugena built into this prayer.

A. The Nothing Beyond The Nothing Accessible Even To The Purest Mind

Alumnus affirms two nothings. The one is the void that even the purest mind finds beyond contemplation. The other is the Nothing that is beyond contemplation. This second Nothing, as it happens, is a plenitude beyond comprehension or expression, and identical with what Alumnus wants to know directly, without reflections, even reflections of his own mind: namely, God.

Beyond imagination, comprehension, and expression, God could be named "Nothing", the nothing out of which the world was made, not a privation of Being, but the transcending, inaccessible and yet most intimate eminence of divinity, more than Being.¹³⁵ All created things, invisible and visible, through the whole descending and ascending chain of energies in nature were manifestations of the divine.¹³⁶ Reversing the order of their egress from Him, in a kind of death, all returned to the God who is "Nothing".¹³⁷

As Eriugena reflected on the stories of Creation in Genesis, he found the great abyss a symbol for the divine Origin, the place where were the primordial causes of all things, exemplars of the intelligible world hidden in what was for created intellects the depth of darkness – incomprehensible, impenetrable darkness to them, since they could not perceive the brightness of its transcendent splendour. At the end, they returned to that divine darkness, sinking into the shadows of incomprehensible light, which was God himself.¹³⁸ In that

¹³⁵ *Periphyseon*, 3. 5, 14, 19, 22, ed. CCCM 163, pp. 242-249, 372, 440-448, 461-466 (*PL* 122, col. 634-635, 663, 680-682).

¹³⁶ *Periphyseon*, 3. 19, 22, ed. CCCM 163, pp. 442-444, 458-466 (*PL* 122, cols. 680-681, 685-687).

¹³⁷ *Periphyseon*, 5. 21, ed. CCCM 165, pp. 386-388 (*PL* 122, col. 898).

¹³⁸ *Periphyseon*, 2. 15, 17, ed. CCCM 162, pp. 218, 232-234 (*PL* 122, cols. 546, 550-551); 5. 26, 39, ed. CCCM 165, pp. 468-472, 854-858 (*PL* 122, cols. 919-920, 1020-1021). CARABINE, *John Scottus Eriugena*, p. 99. MCGINN, *The Growth of Mysticism*, p. 103.

radiant, pitch-black night, Eriugena located his true self, not the man, John Scotus Eriugena, but the abstract intellectual idea, Man.

Eriugena's use of the "two ways", apophatic and cataphatic, in which the negative is affirmed (*negati affirmatio*) lay at the heart of his reasoning.¹³⁹ His method will be familiar, in a different context, to those acquainted with Buddhism. They too will know that in Buddhism such paradoxes are used to baffle the mind and lead to the extinction of the ego. Enlightenment comes in attaining the unattainable where there is no "yes" or "no", and enlightenment at the moment the ego is extinguished is symbolized, not by seeing light in a cave, but by blowing out a lamp. In its way, Eriugena's concept of Man, void of personal identity in the bright darkness of God, is also an extinction of ego.

B. Jesus Is Always Found And Not Found Always

A key to this second paradox comes at the end of the prayer. Alumnus abruptly ended the prayer with a contrast between verbiage and authentic understanding, an indication of Eriugena's conviction that the essence of Scripture was, not what the text said, but what it meant. He was also sure that no amount of labour, piling words on top of words, would unlock the spirit-given meaning in the text, and that grace alone imparted spiritual understanding. Only God's invisible hand could lead the inquirer to the heights at which truth was most completely revealed. In his prayer, Alumnus portrays the action of grace: Jesus allows himself to be understood by ministering his presence to those whom he has chosen and invited to feast in his words.¹⁴⁰

In this second paradox, Eriugena distinguishes between what we see and what we recognize in what we see. He draws on his doctrine of theophanies and, with it, his more general doctrine of *phantasiae*.

In his prayer for access to the Word in the words of Scripture, Alumnus says that Jesus was found in his theophanies, markers on the countless ascending steps by which Jesus chose to pass in the understandings of the elect who

¹³⁹ *Periphyseon*, 3. 4, ed. CCCM 163, pp. 238-241 (PL 122, col. 633). See also Eriugena's consideration of incomprehensibility as an aspect of human self-knowing that resulted from humanity's image-likeness to God, its prototype. *Periphyseon*, 4. 7, ed. CCCM 164, pp. 298-301 (PL 122, col. 771): "*cuius ignorantia vera est sapientia, quae melius nesciendo scitur*". See OTTEN, *The Anthropology of Johannes Scottus Eriugena*, pp. 179-180, 185.

¹⁴⁰ *Periphyseon*, 3. 1, ed. CCCM 163, pp. 214-216 (PL 122, col. 627); 5. 38, ed. CCCM 165, p. 834 (PL 122, col. 1014): "*Non enim illuc natura humanam mentem sublevat, sed gratia et mandatis Dei obedientiae purissimaeque (quantum in hac vita datur) dei per litteram et creaturam cognitionis meritum subvenit*".

sought and found him. Eriugena's analysis of theophanies is characteristically intricate; but his equation of one kind of theophanies with what he called *phantasiae* is particularly germane to my subject. *Phantasiae* were images formed in the memory from sensory observation and experience. They were true; for, since all things participated in God, God was the basis of their images deposited in memories. They were theophanies precisely because they manifested Truth. Such images could be accurate likenesses of earthly things; but the senses themselves could be misled, by optical illusions for example or by mistaking echoes for original sounds.¹⁴¹ Thus, Jesus is always found in what we see, but he is not found always in how we recognize what we see.

What makes *phantasiae* deadly are the carnal appetites, perverted desires, and lusts aroused by sensory experiences, which are not in human nature, but come from outside it. The mind is corrupted when it consents to the senses. The great majority of human beings live on the level of the senses, the temporal, their *phantasiae* deflecting them from their return to God.¹⁴² Alumnus has some such ideas in mind when he speaks of speculation that deceives, and of ascending theophanies.

As for the elect, rising beyond the burdens of their earthly senses, Alumnus says in his prayer that Jesus ministers to each mind according to its capacity, each catching a different reflection as though Jesus were passing through a hall of wildly assorted mirrors, each reflection being authentic, none encompassing the full divine reality of the nothing that is beyond what the purest rational soul can discover, the nothing that John the Evangelist saw, transcending all vision and flying on eagle's wings beyond all things that are and are not.¹⁴³

As the human race reversed the process of separation and diversification into matter which had led it from God, the moral and animal deformations intruded on its original nature would be transformed into immortality and spirituality. Like Jesus, ordinary human beings would be transformed into God.

In his prayer, Alumnus refers to love once, not the erotic, desiring love of *amor*, or the self-giving love of *charitas*, but the love of conscious, dedicated adherence, *dilectio*. (The verb *diligo* is related to the adverb *diligenter*, "diligently".) Although many verbs are assigned to Jesus in the prayer, there is no reference to love, of any kind, that flows downward, from God or Jesus to

¹⁴¹ *Periphyseon*, 3. 12, ed. CCCM 163, pp. 14-15 (PL 122, col. 659); 5. 36, ed. CCCM 165, pp. 634-638 (PL 122, col. 963). See the physiological explanations of sight and hearing in *Periphyseon*, 1. 37, ed. CCCM 161, pp. 274-276 (PL 122, col. 480); 3. 36, ed. CCCM 163, pp. 642-649 (PL 122, cols. 730-731).

¹⁴² STEEL, "The tree of the knowledge of Good and Evil", pp. 249-252.

¹⁴³ Jean Scot, *Homélie sur le Prologue de Jean*, c. 1, ed. E. JEAUNEAU (Paris, 1969: SC 151), pp. 204-208.

those who seek them and wish and rise to comprehend them. There is no reference to an exchange of loves.

Eriugena taught, as did Augustine, that ignorance of self was one result of sin.¹⁴⁴ However, Eriugena's project of self-knowing lacks any developed focus on personality, unique and contingent, and, correspondingly, any developed psychology explaining how the mind worked. There was no mapping of the inner world for him. And yet, Eriugena could not quite escape the limits of the personal, with all its contingencies. Knowing, including self-knowing, depended on sensory data, information gathered through the organ of one's own all too contingent body, set in order according to the power of reason, which came from outside the individual, from God, but was modulated in each person according to individual capacity.¹⁴⁵ The divine origin of all things, especially of reason, made such knowing a matter of potential theophanies, revelations of God; Jesus is always found. The limits of each individual intruded uncertainty; Jesus is not found always.

C. "You Permit Yourself To Be Understood: Not What You Are, But What You Are Not, And That You Are"

I come to the third great paradox in Alumnus's prayer. Here, as throughout the *Periphyseon*, Eriugena deploys that invincible weapon of negative theology – the "one-two punch" of cataphatic and apophatic propositions – to liberate God from anthropology.

The first words of the prayer – "O Lord Jesus" – take us to Eriugena's philosophical bias against visual arts. In Alumnus's prayer, Eriugena establishes the way in which the spiritual meaning, Jesus, the Word, is openly found in the words of Scripture. Jesus is found, not by any sensory perception, intellectual apprehension, or emotional stirring, but by grace as Jesus passes, ministering his presence in some incommunicable way to his chosen ones and surpassing them. He allows himself to be found, not as what he is, but as what he is not: that is, not in his all-surpassing divinity, but in such ways as the elect are capable of understanding him in his limited manifestations, in theophanies.

Eriugena's contemporary, Paschasius Radbertus, had written similarly of Christ in us, moving toward the Father.¹⁴⁶ However, Paschasius's conception of

¹⁴⁴ *Periphyseon*, 4. 9, ed. CCCM 164, p. 324 (PL 122, col. 777). On Augustine, see above, n. 6.

¹⁴⁵ *Periphyseon*, 2. 23, ed. CCCM 162, pp. 342-347 (PL 122, cols. 577-578).

¹⁴⁶ Paschasius Radbertus, *De Corpore et Sanguine Domini*, c. 22, ed. B. PAULUS (Turnhout,

humanity's union with Christ as one body was sacramental, and that of its movement toward the Father was both historical and eschatological. By contrast, advancing through time to the end of time, Eriugena's transit of Jesus negated corporeality, even that of sacraments, and his movement lacked time and place.¹⁴⁷ The transit of Jesus is related to Eriugena's doctrine that Christ was daily conceived, born, and nourished in the womb of faith, just as though he were in the inward parts of His most chaste mother.¹⁴⁸ Significantly, Eriugena chose to omit death and resurrection from this list.

Whatever philosophers say about God is limited by individual capacities, if not wrong. In the end, Eriugena adopted a kind of Christian agnosticism. How far was he from dogmatic theology? He commended the *Periphyseon* to his friend Wulfad with a statement that would have been at home in the Enlightenment: "Let every interpreter abound in his own theory", he wrote, "until that Light comes which makes the light of false philosophers darkness and converts into light the darkness of those who rightly know".¹⁴⁹

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Enough has been said to demonstrate Eriugena's determination to liberate theology from anthropology. I call your attention to the three paradoxes in Alumnus's prayer: the affirmation of a nothing that even the purest mind can find beyond contemplation contrasted with the *Nothing* that *is* beyond it; Jesus always found and not found always; Jesus understood not as what he is but as what he is not. All three are markers of the apophatic method. As I suggested earlier, Eriugena used this mind-bending method systematically to keep God from being swallowed up in anthropology, to deliver every proposition about God from human connotations. By its denials, more radically true than any positive statements, the apophatic way ruled out, not only human attributes of God, but also even the most remote adequacy of pictorial, as well as verbal, representations. I believe that I have also been able to indicate that the absence

1969: CCCM 16), 16, pp. 129-130. K.F. MORRISON, *The Mimetic Tradition of Reform in the West* (Princeton, 1982), pp. 122-123.

¹⁴⁷ See MCGINN, *The Growth of Mysticism*, p. 94: "Eriugena often used the term *transitus* ('dynamic passage from one state to another', would be a possible translation) to describe the process of how the exegete moves through the infinity of textual meanings to the divine unitary source".

¹⁴⁸ *Periphyseon*, 2. 33, ed. CCCM 162, p. 488 (PL 122, col. 611).

¹⁴⁹ *Periphyseon*, 5. 40, ed. CCCM 165, p. 865 (PL 122, col. 1022).

of these doctrines militated against the use of devotional images by excluding the possibility of compassion from Eriugena's theology.

It will be no surprise that Eriugena also found himself, "Man", made in the image of God, in a similar "yes" and "no" mind-bender. As Bernard McGinn concluded, "the primacy of negative theology in Eriugena is complemented by his negative anthropology" in which neither God nor human beings were able to know themselves.¹⁵⁰ Eriugena's objective in doing philosophy piously was to lose himself in the world of the unseen.

4. Concluding Non-Paradoxical Postscript

Eriugena began his history of the world with the loss of nudity: that is, when authentic human nature, invisible because it was spiritual, was clothed in flesh as a consequence of sin. He ended his history with nudity regained: the destruction of physical existence and the return of humanity to its original unadorned, immaterial simplicity.

In this essay, I have reconstructed some landmarks in the great return to primal nudity as Eriugena projected it. As we have seen, his thinking was formed by habitual use of the reciprocal "two ways" – positive and negative – to talk about God, and by his conviction that the negative way (or as he described it, "the affirmation of the denied") was superior in truth. Affirming propositions about God – the positive way – merely clothed the nakedness of divine being with ill-fitting human metaphors. The way of negation stripped away those accretions and revelled authentic nakedness, the Nothing beyond nothing. We have also seen that the soul could approach the Nothing that God was only by stripping away all bodily senses and intellectual activities and, in a state of spiritual nudity, entering a state of unawareness.

I have been able to suggest how mortality, animality, and rationality figured in Eriugena's abstract, impersonal conception of world order. His inattention to laughter, which he accepted as a distinctively human trait, underscores the absence of compassion, and its underpinnings, as well as his attention to the other three characteristics, and, in fact, his conception of man as an intellectual idea.

¹⁵⁰ MCGINN, *The Growth of Mysticism*, p. 105. McGinn discerningly widens the parallel to include Eriugena's doctrine that neither God nor humanity was capable of self-knowing, and indeed, that God did not "know humanity in so far as it [was] one with the divine mind that [was] the cause of itself".

Eriugena seldom mentioned laughter, though from time to time in the *Periphyseon* he did refer to the mocking laughter reserved for ridiculous doctrines and those who think them up. He scornfully dismissed those who believed in the bodily resurrection of the dead. Reason, he wrote, would rather laugh at such teachings than argue with them.¹⁵¹ His own teachings and accumulations of patristic authorities would be laughing-stocks if he were in error.¹⁵² In his poetry, he demonstrated a natural flair for provoking laughter through satire, facetiousness, and sarcasm. Perhaps he used those devices, the vicious siblings of irony, for the same reason he paid great attention to combinations of meter, sounds, and the choice of words: to “avoid monotony”.¹⁵³

I should like to think that Eriugena’s ingenuity and zeal for turning concrete, pragmatic language of Scripture into metaphors of high mysticism – of non-rationality, invisibility, and namelessness – beyond the reach of “the simple” also expressed a gamesman’s mind disposed to laughter, even if it were the disposition of reason to laugh at pedestrian literalists. I am also prepared to hear a connoisseur’s refined, if chilly, laughter, in the all-encompassing paradoxes of the positive and negative ways, paradoxes that began with “God is nothing” and included “Man is an animal; man is not an animal”. Some of these, having to do with the Incarnation of Christ, the Word, Eriugena called “paradoxes of God (*paradoxa Dei*)”.¹⁵⁴ Indeed, Eriugena flashes sardonic humour in suggesting that God granted Adam’s request for a helpmeet out of “divine irony”, and so set in train the advent of human animality.¹⁵⁵

Eriugena was not the only one who could cast a good paradox. People who devoutly used religious images had arrows in their quivers too. What strikes me about Eriugena’s brilliant, encyclopedic paradoxes is how completely they omit the key paradoxes by which Christian writers drew analogies between divine mysteries and the visual arts. There was only a handful of those paradoxes, endlessly repeated in every branch of Church literature. As it happens, all of them were paradoxes drawn, not from theology at all, but from the basic joke in any art that, to do its job, has to fool the eye.

¹⁵¹ *Periphyseon*, 5. 37, ed. CCCM 165, p. 720 (PL 122, col. 985): “...quae vera plus deridet quam astruit ratio”. For other similar uses, see 1. 63, ed. CCCM 161, p. 398 (PL 122, col. 508); 3. 7, ed. CCCM 163, p. 414 (PL 122, col. 674).

¹⁵² Above, n. 123.

¹⁵³ *Iohannis Scotti Erivgenae Carmina*, ed. HERREN, pp. 26, 27, 55.

¹⁵⁴ *Iohannis Scotti Erivgenae Carmina*, No. 2, ed. HERREN, p. 66, “*Aspice praeclarum radiis*”.

¹⁵⁵ Above, n. 18.

Here are three paradoxes used to elucidate religious art. (1) Profane or sacred, *trompe l'oeil* makes us see what we do not see. (2) The work of art is not what it is (Magritte played on this ancient paradox in his celebrated painting of a pipe entitled "This is not a pipe"). (3) To persuade, *trompe l'oeil* art must conceal itself as much as magicians do, and never show its hand. These three paradoxes from games of *trompe l'oeil* explained what made religious art a stimulus to compassion and thereby a tool of self-knowing. They served, not to extinguish the ego, but to elucidate how the ego, and its contingent appetites and passions, worked. This was part of the acceptance of physicality which, Eriugena thought, reason dismissed with laughter, as not worth talking about, in those who believed in the resurrection of the body.

The crux of the matter was that these paradoxes elucidated material forms of representation – the figures and styles of *trompe l'oeil* for the eyes of the body – while Eriugena's paradoxes elucidated the immaterial flux of process that the eye of the mind, or the heart, could catch if, blessed with grace, it went beyond material forms, and even beyond the range of intellect.

He was not primarily concerned with the physical "nature of this visible machine", the cosmos, as he was with its nature as process, a polyrhythmic harmony moving toward resolution. The truths Eriugena apprehended through theophanies were gnostic, for the few.

His disdain for "the simple" and for any *consensus fidelium* is clear in his repugnance for interpretations that opened Scripture to the sensual imaginations of the simple. Possibly, he felt similar disdain for religious pictures, the proverbial "books of the unlearned".

Are we to have religious art or not? If so, what are we to use it for? Assimilation of alien wisdoms, like the one Eriugena attempted between the words of Scripture and his own intellectual culture, take many lifetimes. Xenophanes of Colophon wrote about illumination through this kind of collective trial and error: "the gods did not reveal all things to mortals in the beginning: men must pursue a long search before they find the better thing".

APPENDIX A

John Scotus Eriugena
Prayer on the Transit of Jesus
translated by
Karl F. Morrison

(Latin text in *CCCM* 165, pp. 818-819 (*PL* 122, col. 1010))

O Lord Jesus, I ask of you no other reward, no other blessedness, no other joy, than that I may understand unalloyed, without any error of deceptive reflection, your words inspired by your holy Spirit. This is the completion of my happiness, and it is the end of perfect contemplation, since even the purest rational soul can find nothing beyond it, because *Nothing* is beyond it. You are sought nowhere more fittingly than in your words, since you are found nowhere more openly than in them.

Indeed, you dwell there, and you lead those seeking and loving you into that place. There you prepare for your chosen ones a spiritual feast of true knowing. There, as you pass, you minister to them.

And what, Lord, is this passage of yours, except an ascent through countless steps of contemplating you? For you always make your passage in the understandings of those seeking and finding you. You are always sought by them and you are always found, and you are not found always.

To be sure, you are found in your theophanies, in which you meet, in multitude like that of various mirrors, the minds of those understanding you, in such fashion as you permit yourself to be understood: not what you are, but what you are not, and that you are. Still, you are not found in your mode of Being beyond being, in which you pass and surpass every intellect wishing and rising up to comprehend you. Therefore, you minister your presence to those who are yours by appearing in some way which cannot be told. You pass beyond them by the incomprehensible height and infinity of your Being.

Analytical Postscript

MARCO MOSTERT and JEAN-CLAUDE SCHMITT

This volume contains the proceedings of a conference on “Verbal and Pictorial Imaging: Representing and Accessing Experience of the Invisible, 400-1000” which took place in Utrecht in December 2003. The authors of the present Postscript to the conference proceedings had been asked to offer Conclusions. They complied, although it was clear that on the spur of the moment they could do little more than offer some personal observations which possibly might prove useful in drawing together some of the findings of the papers presented and pointing out some future avenues of research. The papers presented during the conference have been thoroughly revised and edited prior to inclusion in this volume. The Conclusions, on the contrary, have remained close to what was offered back in December 2003. In their published form they are as provisional as they were then. They do not presume to go beyond the Introduction; their possible use is, as before, limited to suggesting some ways in which the debate might be continued.

Studying the Seeing of the Invisible

by MARCO MOSTERT

What do we know about the ways in which early medieval mankind experienced the invisible? How did one form a mental image of things that cannot be seen? These exciting questions are at the centre of the contributions to this volume. Somewhat surprisingly, though, until now they have been but seldom

raised, even if they merit attention from anyone interested in the history of mentalities, the history of ideas or indeed the history of communication. For historians of mentalities (or for the students of historical anthropology), the “subjective, psychological side of the historical process” is at the centre of attention. A historical source is not approached “as an inanimate artifact but as the creation of the human psyche”; it is used in the study of “psychological aims and changing conceptions of the world”. Such historians wish to identify “characteristic, coded intellectual resources and ways of adapting to the world”.¹ For historians of ideas, the study of the ways in which one attained knowledge of God is important. Showing and telling, i.e. visual and verbal images and stories, were part and parcel of the essentially paradoxical Christian discourse which needed to explain a Truth that defied explanation.² But how did this Truth relate to the mental images which were objectified in pictorial images and stories? For historians of communication, the manner in which pictorial and verbal modes of communication were used in transmitting mental images through objectified images to an audience, intended or otherwise, is of great interest.

The main questions addressed in the investigations printed here concern both perception with the eyes of the body and perception with the eyes of the mind and heart. They also concern communicating the ‘invisible’ which is ‘seen’: through pictorial images, the spoken or written word, or through an enactment or performance. And finally, because those engaged in this communication need to come to some understanding about what they mean when they talk about ‘seeing’ and ‘the invisible’, the authors also consider the development of early medieval thought on ‘seeing the invisible’.

There exists indeed a body of work addressing issues tangential to the matter discussed in this volume.³ For instance, the processes of ‘reading’ texts and images, their interpretation, and the acts undertaken upon the reception of imaged messages are the studied by historians of communication.⁴ Developments in early medieval thinking about pictorial images have also been studied often, for instance in the course of investigations of the different roles of sacred

¹ A. GUREVICH, *Historical Anthropology of the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 3, 5, 9.

² A. CAMERON, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire: The Development of Christian Discourse* (Berkeley etc., 1991).

³ See in particular the essays of G. DE NIE, collected in her *Word, Image and Experience: Dynamics of Miracle and Self-Perception in Sixth-Century Gaul* (Aldershot, 2003).

⁴ See *Reading Images and Texts: Medieval Images and Texts as Forms of Communication. Papers from the Third Utrecht Symposium on Medieval Literacy, organized by the ‘Pionier Project Verschriftelijking’, Utrecht, 7-9 December 2000*, ed. M. HAGEMAN and M. MOSTERT (Turnhout, 2004: *Utrecht Studies in Medieval Literacy* 8).

images in the East and the West.⁵ However, to my knowledge no scholarly colloquium has ever addressed all questions involved in 'seeing the invisible' simultaneously.

Quite possibly the reason for this lies in the ostensible inaccessibility of the phenomenon under discussion. Readers who have finished their perusal of this volume will have found proof that it is in fact possible to say something of value on verbal and pictorial imaging of experiencing invisible realities in the early Middle Ages. Yet one may also feel slightly uneasy about the many, seemingly contradictory ways in which the subject is approached. This unease is understandable, as the authors of the papers stress different aspects of the problem.

It may be helpful to consider a diagrammatic model of the problem at issue (fig. 1). Hopefully, this may clarify some of the complexities the authors have had to deal with. In this model, a distinction is made between:

- (mental) objects (1, 3 and 5);
- three different ways of 'seeing' (2, 4, 6), acts that may be compared to the (socially perceptible) action (7) resulting from the third way of 'seeing';
- and thinking about (mental or objectified) images (9, 11) or about the three ways of 'seeing' (8, 10, 12).

All thoughts (8-12), all mental imaging (2) and the resulting mental images (3) occur in the mind of the individual. The fabrication of (objectified) images (4) and the resulting verbal and visual images (5), though decided by the minds of individuals, may be physically perceptible by others. Indeed, that is the whole point of producing works of art, literary, philosophical or theological texts. Objectified visual and verbal images and their fabrication thus mark the overlapping between the individual and the social spheres. Objectified images are added to reality by their makers. Enriching reality in the process, they also make it more complex. When, upon an image's reception (upon seeing a visual image or hearing a verbal image), someone undertakes action, that action, too, may perceptibly change experienced reality.

There are two important reasons for the apparent inconsistencies in the approaches of this collection's authors. First, it makes a difference whether they investigate primarily pictorial images (for instance works of art) or verbal images (for instance theological or philosophical texts). Secondly, they use the words 'visible', 'invisible' and 'seeing' to refer to different things. From the

⁵ See, for instance *The Sacred Image East and West*, ed. R. OUSTERHOUT and L. BRUBAKER (Urbana and Chicago, 1995).

context it is quite clear what is meant in any particular instance by, for instance 'seeing'. When the volume is read as a whole, however, one has to be aware that one author's 'seeing' is not necessarily the same as that of another. This problem had not been anticipated by the organizers. The awareness of the terminological difficulties, as obvious as they might seem once they have been pointed out, may prove to be more important than might appear at first glance.

Let us consider the diagram in some detail.

Reality, or so our everyday experience teaches us, consists of things that are regarded as truly existing. We may also imagine things into existence: things that, until we imagined them, had been inexistent. Which imagined things we believe to be real is decided by the ways of thought current in the societies we happen to live in. In any society there will always be things considered by some to be real, while others deny those same things their claim to reality. The world of any society, modern, medieval or otherwise, allows for the occurrence of existent and inexistent things.

Knowledge of things regarded as existing is commonly acquired through the physical senses. Of these, that of vision may be considered the most important. Consider, for instance how 'to see' does not only refer to 'discerning by use of the eyes', but also, in a figurative sense, to 'discerning mentally, understanding', and 'foreseeing mentally'. These meanings and connotations of words to do with vision are not confined to the English language; they also occur in Latin, for instance. Words for 'vision' and 'seeing' are used both for apprehending that which a society considers to be physically visible reality and for understanding reality as such, whether that reality is considered to be physically visible or invisible. For that which exists may be either visible or invisible to our physical eyes, just as we may see it or fail to see it with our mind's eye. What a society considers to be visible and invisible in a figurative sense is decided by that society's views on the nature of knowledge.

Is knowledge of things that cannot be perceived by the physical senses possible? Can these things be 'seen' through mental images? And if so, which ones? The answers given to these questions in any society are decided, again, by the views on the nature of knowledge espoused in that society. If we wish to consider the views on these matters prevalent in the societies flourishing between the years 400 and 1000 of our era, we are dependent for our knowledge on the objectified verbal and pictorial images those societies produced. Although we wish to find out something about the mental images of both physically visible and invisible realities, of both objectively and subjectively existing realities in these early medieval societies, we would be hard put to say something on the mental images of reality of our own contemporaries, unless these

mental images have left some trace either in objectified visual and verbal images or in the socially perceptible actions inspired by perceiving these visual and verbal images. Likewise, we can learn something about early medieval men's mental images only through studying the objectified traces which they have left in pictorial and verbal sources. First we need to study the verbal images recorded in early medieval texts, the visual images recorded in early medieval works of art, and the early medieval descriptions and depictions of the acts inspired by mental images. Only then can we start to answer questions about possible changes and developments in the views on "how the dynamic patterns of experience of the invisible are discovered, transmitted, and possibly affected by being 'trapped' and delineated by verbal and pictorial images".⁶

The focus in many of this volume's papers is on the objectified visual and verbal images known through contemporary sources. What we can infer from them about the ways in which mental images were perceived remains to be seen. Other questions are easier to answer: How did early medieval people think about (objectified) visual and verbal images as such? And how were these objectified images themselves 'seen'? Were visual images always meant to be 'visible' in a physical sense? If one starts from the available evidence, then two ways of 'seeing' are privileged, i.e. the 'seeing' of the producer of objectified images and that of the consumer of visual or verbal images. The problem of mental imaging, the 'seeing' of a reality represented by mental images, is less often the focus of attention. Similarly, studying early medieval thinking about objectified images, about the making of visual or verbal images, or about the reception of these images is easier – though difficult enough – than investigating the concurrent contemporary thinking about how mental images were formed and what they represented. For some of the authors of the texts incorporating the objectified verbal images studied here, the justification for thinking in images in part came from the conviction that the thinkers were themselves images of God, and that their whole process of knowing moved by likeness between their vegetal souls and vegetal creation, between their sensory souls and sensory creation, and between their rational souls (subsuming the other two) and rational creation.⁷ Quite possibly some of the makers of the objectified visual images studied shared these views.

⁶ Quoted from the announcement of the colloquium.

⁷ I would like to thank Karl Morrison for pointing this out. This is inspired by the view on the soul held by Gregory of Nyssa († 394), who distinguished λόγος, θυμός and ἐπιθυμία (cf. A.S. ELLVERSON, *The Dual Nature of Man: A Study in the Theological Anthropology of Gregory of Nazianzus* (Uppsala and Stockholm, 1981). Needless to say, there were also other opinions (cf. B. MOJSISCH, "Seele: I. Westen", *Lexikon des Mittelalters* 7.8 (München and Zürich, 1995), cols. 1675-1677 and H.M. BIEDERMANN, "Seele: II. Ostkirche", *ibid.*, cols. 1677-1678).

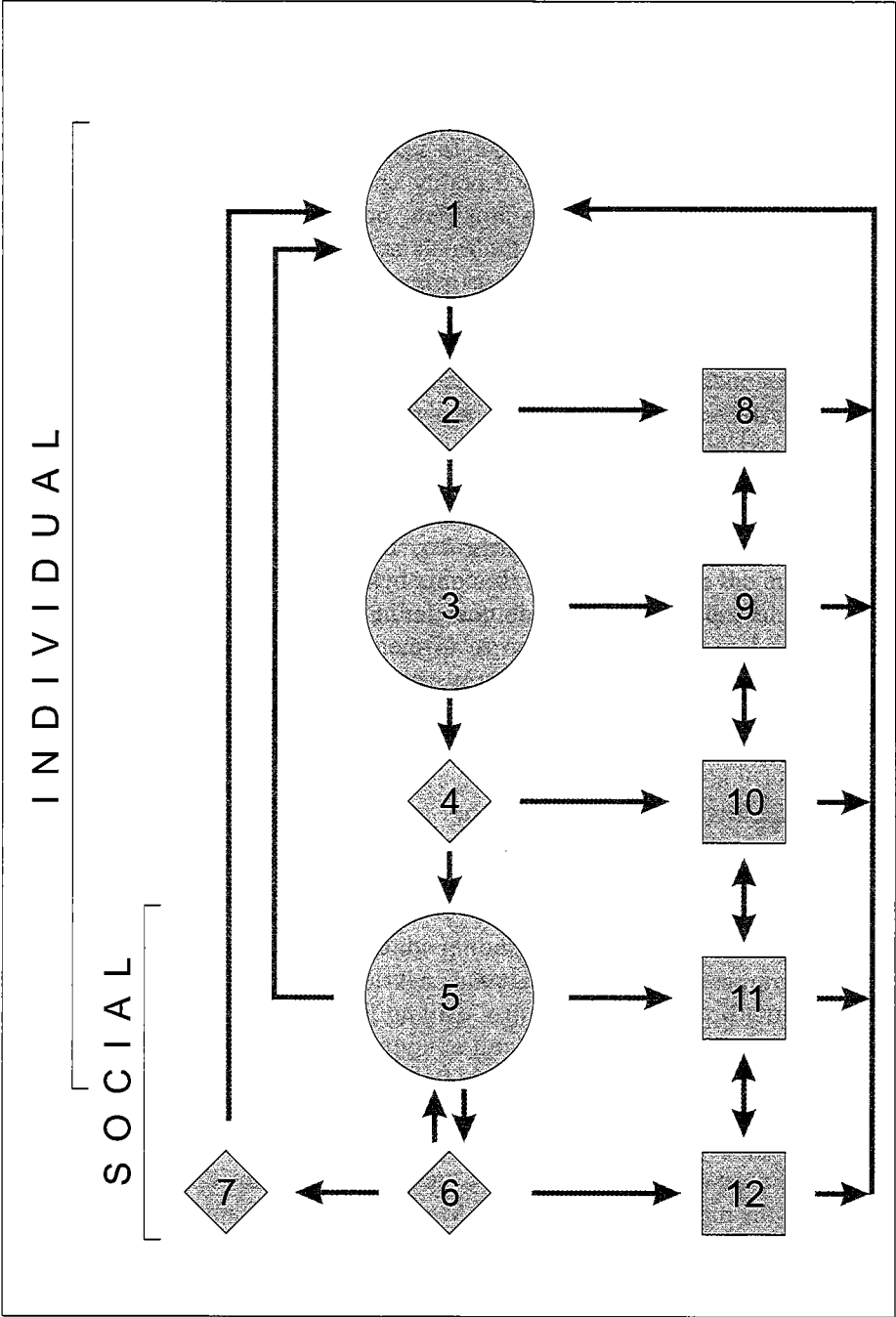
Fig. 1 An attempt to visualize the relationships between reality, perception, and the fabrication of (objectified) images

- 1 Reality
- 2 Imaging (mental) = 'seeing' (1)
- 3 Mental images
- 4 Fabricating objectified images = 'seeing' (2)
- 5 Objectified visual and verbal images
- 6 Reception of objectified images = 'seeing' (3)
- 7 Socially perceptible action
- 8 Thinking about 'seeing' (1)
- 9 Thinking about mental images
- 10 Thinking about 'seeing' (2)
- 11 Thinking about objectified images
- 12 Thinking about 'seeing' (3)

Having read this volume one might come away with the impression that the study of texts is more likely to give us an idea about early medieval thought than the study of works of art. This may be because without a textual context of some sort as a background we are unable to identify and understand the simplest early medieval visual images. Even to call a selection of such images 'works of art' is already a verbal interpretation intended to impose some kind of order on the bewildering panoply of our own visual experiences of the early Middle Ages.⁸ Recent attempts to point out that there are marked differences between the perception of visual images and that of texts fail to address the problem that, even if 'reading images' might be a misguided metaphor, communicating the conscious interpretations of visual images still needs texts, whether these texts are written or oral. To interpret an early medieval *text* that speaks of mental imaging is difficult enough; it can only be done in a dialogue between its author and its modern reader. To interpret an early medieval *work of art* is more difficult still, as it does not 'speak' itself, and needs in a sense a double interpretation, both visual and verbal.

Early medieval artists and craftsmen produced works of art that could in principle be seen with the eyes of the body, even if they were sometimes in effect hidden from view. Some pictorial images, which by their very visibility

⁸ To call objectified visual images 'sources' is a less restrictive way of dealing with these experiences, but is as anachronistic as talking about 'works of art'.



and existence added to the raw matter for mental imaging, were meant to induce a 'seeing' of a reality that could not be pictorially represented. Similarly, sacred objects and certain forms of verbal imagery were meant to induce such 'seeing', for instance as devices in the rhetoric of Christian discourse. In this way both verbal and visual images can be studied as sources as well as products of mental imaging. As a society's reality changes, for instance through the addition of new images and new thoughts, or through the attrition of earlier images and thoughts, its view of the world necessarily changes as well.

The papers in this volume have privileged the mental activities of the intellectual and artistic elites. Most discussions of texts have concentrated on the writings of highly literate thinkers, who, because of their accomplishments, were exceptional. Are their works representative of the thought of their society? Discussion of the views of their contemporaries, described in reports of dreams and visions, shows both the differences and the similarities between the experiences of literates and illiterates. Most papers discussing objectified visual images and sacred objects also stressed the products for elites. By going beyond the canon of art history, their authors, too, managed on occasion to say something about the experiences and thoughts believed to have been prevalent in society. One hopes that, now that a questioning of verbal and pictorial imaging of invisible realities has proven to be viable, more students of images will be induced to look afresh at their materials to see what they might contribute to what may well prove to be an ongoing exploration and discussion.

Methodological Reflections

by JEAN-CLAUDE SCHMITT

It is my frightening duty to formulate some considerations about three days' worth of wonderful papers and vivid discussions, now published between the covers of the book you are reading. Giving a summary of the content of all papers you have read, all of them full of knowledge and scholarship, would be neither easy nor helpful. Instead, I shall offer some personal reflections upon the methods and concepts proposed by the conference's organizers and used by the participants.

First, I must admit, I was struck by the linguistic and methodological homogeneity of the majority of the papers. Most of the participants – including myself – have known each other for a long time, have met in previous conferences on similar topics, and were sometimes even expecting what their colleagues

would tell them! Perhaps we should attempt more diversity in such conferences in order to have a chance to be exposed to unexpected discoveries coming from scholarly traditions - the German and the Italian ones, for instance - different from the ones represented here. After all, Europe's most important wealth is its diversity. Feeling independent enough, however, to look dispassionately at what has been presented, I would like to make three observations.

As its title indicates, the conference's focus was upon 'verbal' and 'pictorial' imaging - hence about texts and pictures. Some papers, in fact most of them, discussed both texts and pictures. The programme appears to show, however, that the organizers made a distinction between two kinds of objects and approaches: that of 'literary' history, dealing with verbal texts, and that of art history, dealing with material pictures and artifacts.

This duality necessitates, first of all, a look at the history of each discipline. From the very beginning, it is important to know not only what we are talking about but also in which kind of discourse we do so. Second, it is not only the texts or figurative objects themselves which we are dealing with, but also their historical reception. I suggest that texts and pictures need to be circumspectly chosen: for many pictures, perhaps the majority of them, were not made in order to be seen, nor to be looked at - as professor Beat Brenk was right in reminding us. And certain texts, read by very few people, had no broad reception; of others - such as that of John Scotus Eriugena - the reception was delayed for decades or even centuries. Finally, still other texts that speak of the visible and invisible had no discernible influence at all upon figurative art, either in their own time or later.

Concluding that point, I think we also ought to be very cautious in talking about texts in combination with pictures, and especially in using texts in order to analyze pictures. For the logic of each medium is completely different, and the social conditions of their reception are not comparable either. Each one requires its own specific kind of understanding.

My second observation concerns the notions of the visible and the invisible. Most of us understood 'visible' to be synonymous with 'pictorial'; sometimes, it was understood in a broader sense, as 'corporeal' - in the case of relics-, and sometimes as 'material', including such objects as reliquaries. But sounds (music) and smells (incense) were also adduced because they too are sensory experiences. I would regard the last and broadest notion as the most suitable one: to fully assess the problems in discerning and accessing the invisible, it is necessary to take into account all kinds of sensory experience and not only that of seeing 'pictures'.

Further, I have some doubts about what, properly speaking, is 'the invisible'. First, because it was almost exclusively referred to as being the divine, whereas what Christians in the Middle Ages called *invisibilia* were either good (belonging to God) or evil (belonging to the Devil). As we were shown, however, the notion of the 'invisible' is much broader than just that of the spiritual kind of *invisibilia*; the part of our reality which we do not see is larger than that which we do actually see. In order to avoid misunderstanding, therefore, we might have distinguished between that which is permanently 'invisible' and that which is merely 'out of sight': removed in time (the past, the future) and in space (what is elsewhere, for instance behind us, what we therefore cannot see). Or, of course, what is elsewhere in another sense, in heaven or in hell; but these are specific instances of the larger problem of seeing and not-seeing, being present to sight or out of sight. To make the absent present, we use our memory and imagination: they are the most powerful and usual modes of making the invisible visible, and the dead alive. 'Pictorial' modes of 'presencing' are only one result of such immaterial modes of making visible what is – temporarily or permanently – out of sight.

I also have doubts about the notion of the invisible itself. My key questions come from two different vantage points. First: is whatever is invisible inspectable and representable at all? I don't think so. And second: is that which is made visible actually 'the invisible' itself or is it something else, which I would rather call the imaginal (*le visuel*) – a term that has no opposite? For when we imagine an absent something or someone, and perhaps try to paint or carve it, we never do so *ex nihilo*: our take-off point is an image, concept or name we already have in mind – the name of God, for instance. Thus God's name, as spoken in a prayer, is not only a word or sound: it represents a familiar concept that evokes many biblical images and colours. Contesting the customary theological discourse about *invisibilia*, therefore, I would claim that the utterly invisible cannot be conceived of, thought or spoken about, even by theologians, without using some kind of mental image or visualization – and that this makes what is spoken about or pictured something different from the utterly invisible itself. In human discourse, then, positing a radical opposition between what is 'visible' and what is 'invisible' is misleading. Rather than opposing these notions, we should look more closely at the process of the transformation of something imaginal (*le visuel*: some kind of mental image) into something visible to the physical eyes. Thus the opposite of the 'visible' world would not be an 'invisible' one, but an imaginal (*visuel*) one that includes all kinds of constructed 'images', not only 'pictorial' ones but also the huge array of mental

images, the realm of *visiones spirituales* constructed by the memory and the imagination.

My third observation is more concrete and historical. What were the characteristics of the processes of ‘presencing’ the invisible in medieval Christian culture? Because this culture was deeply grounded in its first myth of God’s creating mankind “in our image, after our likeness” (Gn 1, 26), as well as in its second myth of the Son of God becoming a Son of Man, such a process was necessarily characterized by:

- anthropomorphism: there was no image of God as half man, half elephant, as in Hinduism; the only exceptions were the symbolical figures of the Tetramorph and of the Holy Spirit as a dove;
- corporeality: from the Christ image to the Eucharist and relics of the saints;
- controversy: because of the fundamental and unique paradox of being a monotheism that – in contrast to Judaism and Islam – tolerated and even promoted images. We all know the dramatic results of that debate during the iconoclastic period and later during the Reformation; the debate about images has in fact been a structural one in Christian culture.

Considering the consequences of these determining factors, we might ask ourselves whether it was not in fact the ornamental, non-figurative and infra-semantic elements in the figurative arts and in liturgy (I am thinking of precious stones, perfumes, melisms and colours, as well as of the whispering accompanying the ‘ruminative meditation’ we have heard about in these days) that induced a lifting out of the everyday, commonsensical kind of awareness that would result in an experience of the real presence of God. Do these non-linguistic, non-pictorial modes perhaps most effectively precipitate the well-known movement of ascending from *visibilia* (sensory experience, broadly conceived) to *invisibilia*, that is: allowing this ‘invisible’ to take on a sensory veil that does not abrogate its heavenly nature?

To clarify all these points, let us consider a text with pictures which we were fortunate enough to see during the conference: the Utrecht Psalter (fig. 2). It may have been used during the services of matins or the vesper (I am intentionally focusing upon its probable reception rather than its production). The monks and clerics of Hautvilliers or Reims, however, knew the psalms and canticles to be sung at each office by heart. They would not actually have needed to look at the manuscript, and certainly not at the pictures. Nevertheless, the book is likely to have been there, to be present before them, and to be opened at the right page as proof that King David had once praised God in the same manner as the churchmen were doing now. And they would have turned the

pages slowly, with measured gestures, in a movement similar to the flapping of birds' wings, letting the pictures and the twice three columns of writing (a number that had symbolic as well as pictorial value) move before their eyes – obviously, the experience would have been much enhanced by the presence around the book of objects of gold, silver and other colours, and of much shimmering candlelight ... This, then, would have been their daily “accessing experience of the invisible”. They were enacting text, song and pictures in order to make themselves witnesses of, and actors in, God's ‘presencing’ here and now, hoping thereby to deserve a future of sharing in God's eternal glory.

Fig. 2 The Utrecht Psalter, MS Utrecht, Universiteitsbibliotheek, 32, f. 41v, Psalm 72.

“The troubled psalmist is seated on a hillside in the upper right of the picture. The Hand of God issues from heaven and grasps his right hand (‘Thou hast holden me by my right hand’, verse 23). Six angels are ranged in groups of threes above the Hand of God, which was probably placed in the middle in the original illustration from which this was copied. Below the psalmist is a mare and her colt, ‘the beast’ unto which the psalmist compares himself in verse 22. Behind him is a walled city with a prominent gate (*‘in portis filiae Sion’*, verse 28). A small tabernacle stands beside the city (verse 17). A personification of the sun representing the ‘day’ or ‘morning’ (verse 14) is at the left of the group of angels in the heavens. In the upper left corner is a group of the wicked who *‘iniquitatem in excelso locuti sunt’* (verse 8). In the right foreground is another group of the wicked trampling their victims. An idol on a pedestal, ‘their image’ (verse 20), is placed to the left of them. Above them a wingless angel holding a whip and spears (the whip suggested by *‘flagellabuntur’* and *‘flagellatus’* of verses 5 and 14), is driving a large number of the wicked into a fiery pit of Hell in which appears the flaming head of Death (verse 18). Above the pit three figures are dreaming on their beds (verse 20). To the right of the angel a number of children are washing their hands in a spring (*‘lavi inter innocentes manus meas’*, verse 13). In the lower right corner a group of the wicked ‘prospering in the world’ are seated about a table filled with food (verse 12)” (K. VAN DER HORST and F. ANKERSMIT, *The Utrecht Psalter: Picturing the Psalms of David* (Utrecht, 1996), CD-rom).



LXXII DEFECERUNT

LAUDES O FILIIES

SEPSAL MUSASAPH

QUAE BONIS ISRA
 HEDS' HIS QUI RECTO
 SUNT CORDE
MELI AUTEM TENEMOTI SI
 PEDES PAENIEFFUSISUNT
 GRISUS MEI
QUI AZELAUISUPERINI
 QUOS PACIMPECCATO
 RUMUIDENS
QUI ANONISTRESPECTUS
 MORTIFORUM ETIR
 MAMENTUMINPLACA
 FORUM
IN LABORE HOMINUM
 NON SUNT ET CUM HO
 MINIBUS NON FLAGEL

LABUNTUR
IDEO TENUTE OSSUPER
 BIA OPERTISUNTINI
 QUITATEETIMPIETATE
 SUA
PRODIITQUASIEADITE
 INIQUITASFORUM
 TRANSIERUNTINAF
 SECTUMCORDIS
COCITAUERUNTETLOCU
 TISUNTNEQUITIAM
 INIQUITATEMINEXCEL
 SOLOCUTISUNT
POSUERUNTINCAELUM
 OSSUUM ETINCUAFO
 RUMTRANSIUITINTRA

IDEO CONUERTE TURPO
 CULUS MEUS HIC ET DI
 CLENINVENIENTUR
 INEIS
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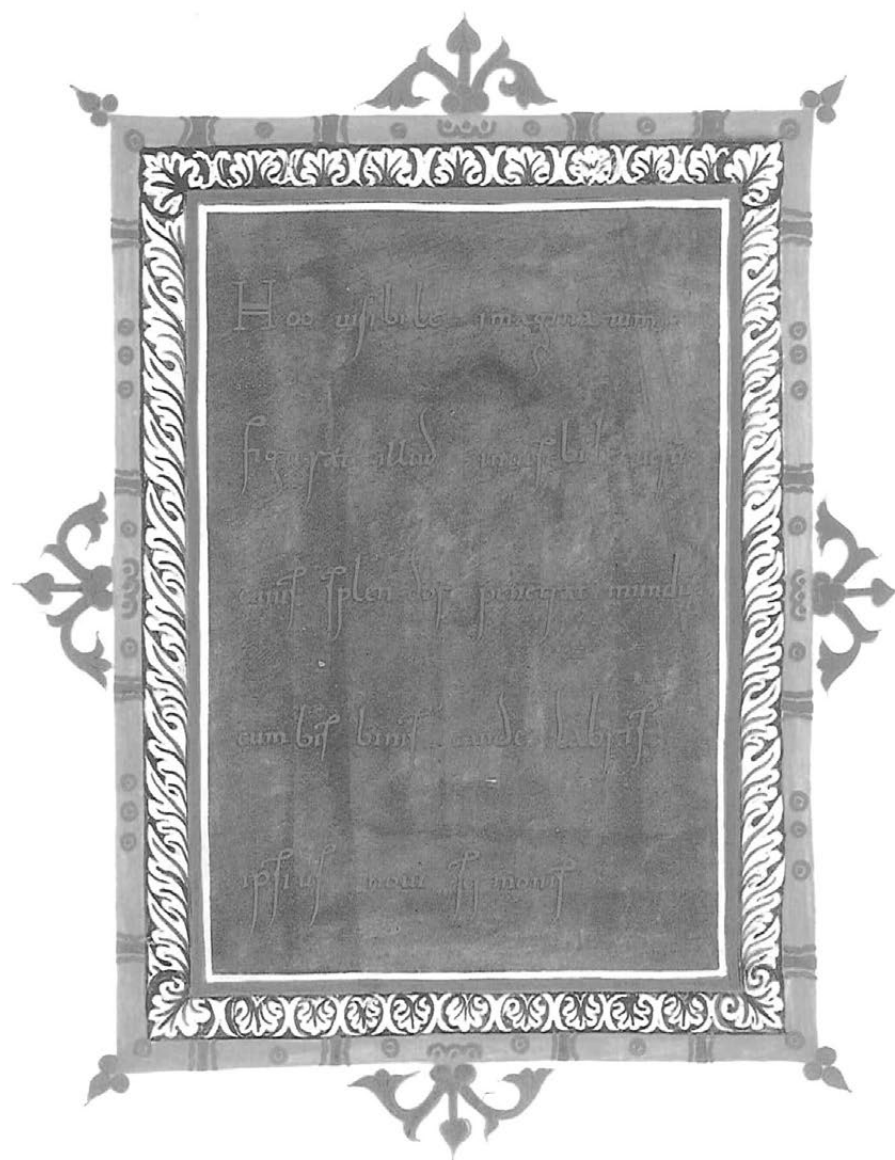
Pl. 1 Rome, S. Costanza, watercolour of Francisca d'Ollanda: the Cupola-Mosaics



Pl. 2 Centcelles, Cupola Mosaic: Steeple Chase and Christian Scenes



Pl. 3 Ravenna, S. Apollinare Nuovo, elevation



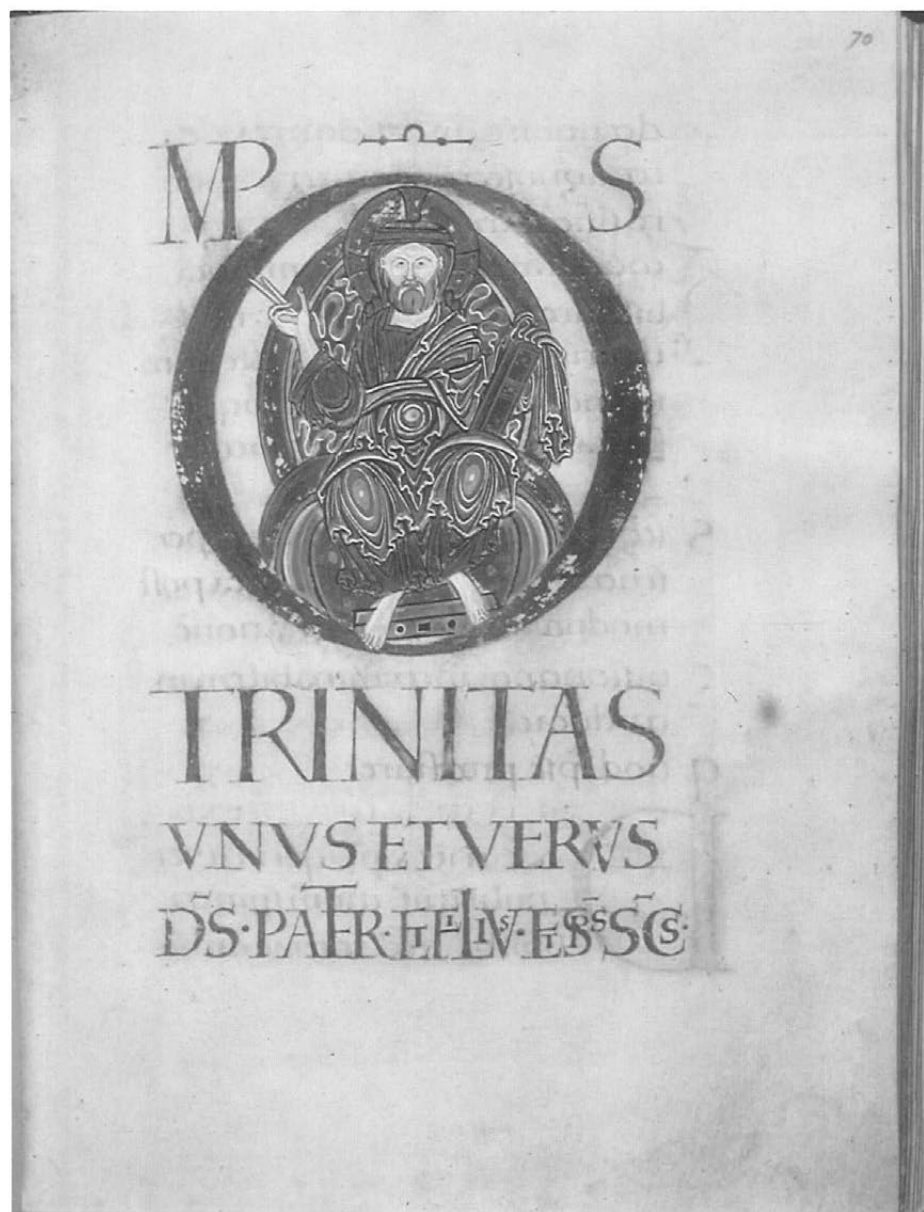
Pl. 4 MS Darmstadt, Landes- und Hochschule Bibliothek, Cod. 1640, f. 6v



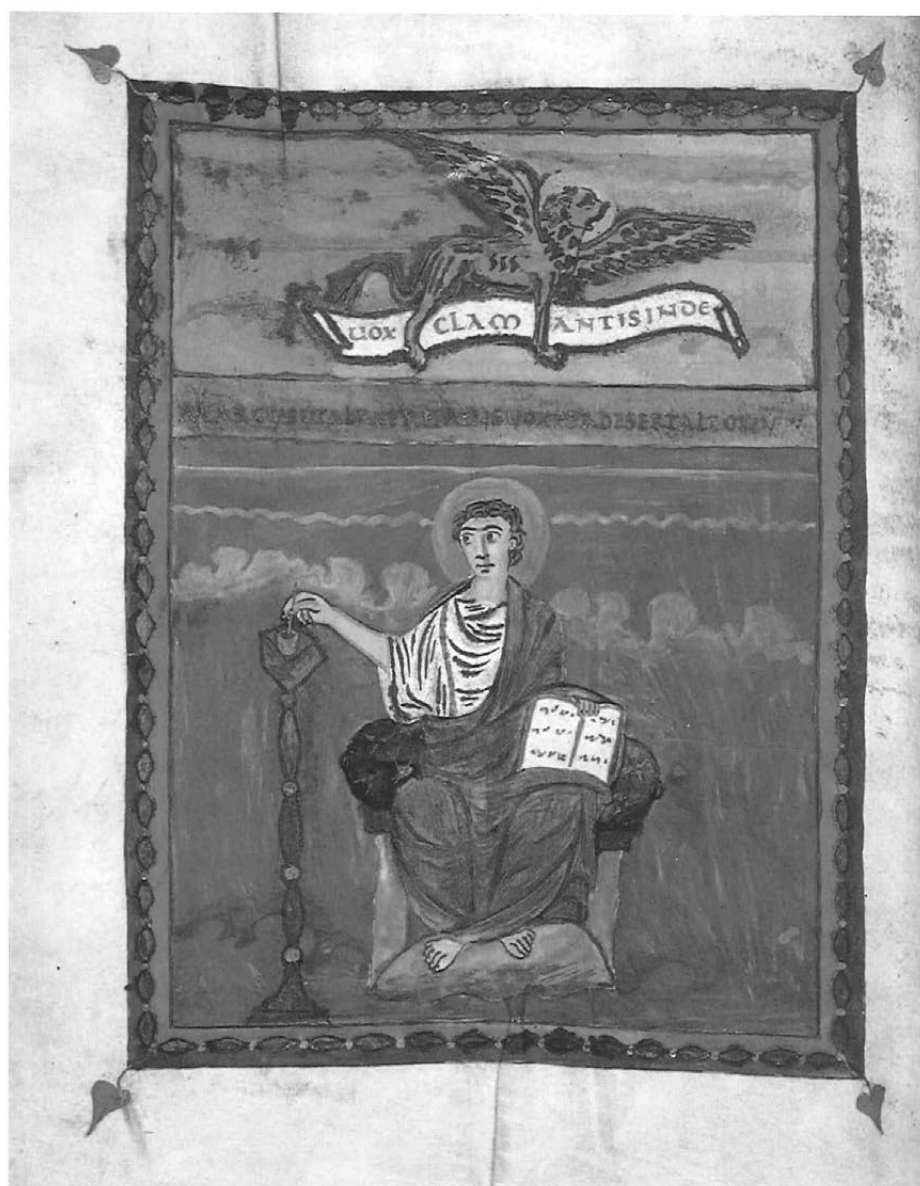
Pl. 5 MS Darmstadt, Landes- und Hochschule Bibliothek, Cod. 1640, f. 7r



Pl. 6 MS Stuttgart, Württembergische Landesbibliothek, Cod. HB II 40, f. 1v



Pl. 7 MS London, BL, Add. 49598, f. 70r



Pl. 8 MS Stuttgart, Württembergische Landesbibliothek, Cod. HB II, 40, f. 63v



Pl. 9 MS Stuttgart, Württembergische Landesbibliothek, Cod. HB II, 40, f. 146v



Pl. 10 MS Paris, BN, lat. 261, f. 17v



Pl. 11 MS Darmstadt, Landes- und Hochschule Bibliothek, Cod. 1640, f. 20r

